



PRAISE THE ORC

BOOK 01

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EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

Praise the Orc!

(You're an Orc, yet you're still Praiseworthy!)

(오크지만 찬양해!)

by

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(이정민)

Synopsis

Praise the Orc! is about Jung Ian, a cafe owner with a dark past, jumping into the world of virtual reality in order to protect his sister from any predators.

However, things may not be as simple as he first believed them to be.

Witness as he explores the lands of Elder Lord as an orc, a species labeled as the “game creator’s mistake”, defeating any and all before him!

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Chapter 1 – Prologue

The big screen that was installed on the building shone. Those who were walking on the street or driving couldn't keep their eyes from the screen.

There was an orc on the screen. A single orc. He was facing thousands of troops alone.

-He showed up again.

-He is blocking the allied forces alone.

-Nobody knows who he is.

-It is unknown if he is a user, an NPC, or a named boss NPC that the game manufacturers have created.

-Everything is unknown.

The commander who led the army approached the orc. The screen zoomed in on the commander's handsome face as he said,

“Do you think you can stop it alone?”

The orc didn't answer, the steel helmet casting a shadow over his

expressionless face.

“Why are you blocking us?”

The narrator explained who the man was.

–An elf, he has the War Maestro class, lauded as a hidden piece, and is the top ranking master of the Heaven and Earth Clan. He is a genius at large-scale tactical command.

–He is Choi Hansung, a popular user called ‘Rommel.’

The orc then opened his mouth.

“Why are you attacking them?”

The orc spoke in a distinctively thick and low voice.

“That...”

Choi Hansung hesitated to speak. The answer was obvious. Due to the ‘large-scale quest’, he wanted to receive ‘items’ and to gain ‘levels’. He would then obtain ‘wealth’ and ‘power’. However, he couldn’t give that answer.

“They are our enemies.”

“Why?”

“If you block us any further, then you will also become our enemy.”

“Didn’t you come to this place to betray their faith, and slaughter the innocents, just to gain money and equipment?”

The orc laughed,

“Human who does not know honor.”

“I am an elf. Are you perhaps a user?”

“Listen carefully.”

The orc raised his gaze. Inside his helmet, a formidable light shone. His appearance on the screen was zoomed in, making him seem like he was looking at everyone.

The orc declared loudly. His voice rang throughout the plains and out of the screen, into the ears of everyone listening.

“I am an orc, a warrior.”

“A warrior doesn’t forsake faith.”

“A warrior doesn’t persecute the weak.”

“A warrior doesn’t attack unarmed people.”

“A warrior doesn’t yield to injustice.”

“A warrior doesn’t shame the gods.”

“A warrior pays back any favors or vengeance.”

“A warrior protects the powerless.”

“I swear to the gods, I will abide by these laws as a warrior.”

The orc lifted his enormous greatsword.

“Prove your honor.”

The body of the orc appeared on the screen.

The earth shook and the entire army, including the commander, took one step back.

The orc laughed, “Come, Human.”

Chapter 2 – Maker’s Mistake (1)

“Game, start!”

At the compulsion, Ian stiffened and shook his head. He was a man who had never succumbed to oppression. He slowly pressed his hand against his younger sister’s forehead in warning as she tried to forcefully push her upper body over the counter.

“If you don’t have any credits, then you are banned from accessing it.”

However, his sister Jung Yiyu didn’t back down.

“Just try connecting as a test. Oppa is always doing everything, which is why you don’t have a girlfriend.”

“Cash or credit?”

“Ah, why do you want to receive money from your little sister!”

“There are other customers waiting behind you, so please hurry.”

“Wah. Really.”

Yiyu’s face turned red as she heard the laughter behind her. She

extended some bills clutched in her fist.

“You are lacking 500 won...”

“Shut up. I’m going to school!”

Yiyu stuck her tongue out and ran away from the cafe. Ian smiled as he looked at her back.

The customer waiting for their turn came up.

“Ian-ssi’s little sister is always cheerful.”

“I wish she was calmer. Did you want an Americano?”

As the man who ran a quiet cafe, Jung Ian always had a kind smile. His tall, slender body and gentle atmosphere meant that quite a few female customers stopped by to see him every day. It had been less than one year since he opened Cafe Reason, but the relaxed atmosphere meant that it was always frequented by regulars.

“Ian-ssi, are you playing Elder Lord?”

“I’m not good at games.”

“It’s a virtual reality game so you should be okay. Ian-ssi should

give it a try. Don't you think that there are more people playing the game than people not playing it?"

"Haha. Is that so? Here is your Iced Americano."

"Please let me know if you ever start. I'll help you, as my level is quite high."

Elder Lord was a virtual reality game that started its service a few months ago.

It already dominated the virtual reality game market due to: the perfect reality that couldn't be compared with existing games, the unique game system, and the fact that the rate of assimilation affected a player's abilities.

Role-playing users who shot movies of their characters were broadcasted during the golden time, while the revenue of the rankers surpassed that of celebrities and sports stars.

The fact that virtual reality was starting to replace reality had now become a slogan. This was the age of Elder Lord.

Ian bought a connection capsule for Yiyu a while ago, but now she wanted him to join her. He could guess the reason why Yiyu was doing this.

Elder Lord was very difficult, and it was hard to level up and improve one's abilities. Monsters and NPCs were also very strong,

so most of the first-time users suffered. They were strangers who entered the world of the NPCs and started from the bottom, so soon after Yiyu started, she couldn't help but whine to Ian to help her.

A person's real abilities could affect their performance in Elder Lord. A player's physical abilities depended on the character, but players could reproduce techniques that they already knew. It was rumored that rankers were people skilled in martial arts or acrobatics.

Ian had seen a war video of Elder Lord on television, and he didn't like it very much.

“...Excuse me?”

“Ah, I'm sorry. What did you say just now?”

“Cappuccino...”

Ian's hands shook as he entered the order. He held his trembling fists and then slowly opened his hand. The shaking stopped, and it felt like his hand was frozen stiff.

At one time, he had been on the battlefield and slept with death around him every day.

He wouldn't ever play Elder Lord. After meeting the eyes of those dying on the battlefield, how could he cheer as he saw a sword

slicing a man's neck in a game?

“Won’t you try it once?”

Ian shook his head.

“What do you mean? I won’t do it.”

“This guy, why are you still caught up in the past? I saw that you were shaking when you were trying to shoot a gun.”

“It isn’t like that.”

Ian turned his gaze away.

The man who was facing him, Baek Hanho, burst out laughing. He wore an improved hanbok, but his hair had pomade in it, and he was wearing an expensive watch. He sipped the coffee that Ian brought and muttered, “Ehh, I can’t drink this.”

“Coffee was originally this bitter.”

“Life isn’t like that either.”

Ian frowned.

Baek Hanho spoke once again before gulping down the coffee. Baek Hanho tilted his head upwards and laughed after drinking all of it.

“You finished it.”

“Didn’t you say that coffee is originally this bitter?”

Baek Hanho laughed and stroked his chin. Then he continued, “I know that coffee is originally bitter water. That’s why I was afraid.”

“I hate it when you speak in zen riddles.”

“You are a coward.”

Ian’s face wrinkled again.

Then Baek Hanho said, “Take a look at your sister, Yiyu. Isn’t she someone who grew up alone? Now her brother won’t even play a game with her. Tsk tsk.”

“.....”

“I’m only joking, but you should seriously consider my words.”

Ian held his chin and started thinking.

Suddenly, the door opened and the notification bell was heard.

There were two people, one tugging at the other. They were both girls, the sound of their high heels heard by the entire cafe as they entered. Their words came out in an unstable tone. In all likelihood, they were the last customers of the day.

Ian automatically checked everything about them, his habits from the battlefield obviously still following him. He heard their voices.

“In regards to Elder Lord, I managed to level up due to Oppa helping me. What about you?”

“Wah...I’m envious. He changed yesterday. How irritating.”

“Changed?”

“That pig suddenly touched my butt...I have truly bad luck.”

“What did you do? Did you report it? Why would he do that? Really?”

Ian’s eyes shook as he heard the conversation. Hanho placed a cookie in his mouth. Then he said to Ian,

“Hum hum. In fact, I am quite far in Elder Lord...”

Then he paused as he saw Ian's eyes.

"...What?"

"Teacher-nim."

"What is it?"

"Elder Lord, how do I connect to it?"

"Have you changed your mind?"

"I have."

Thus, Ian started the game to defend his sister.

"Right."

Huge trees and lush foliage covered the sky. The sunshine pouring through the gaps disturbed his eyes. He stepped on soft soil. He could smell the forest, hear the cries of the birds and saw insects crawling around.

Ian was flustered.

“This...is a game?”

It couldn't be. It was a reality. However, the message windows that surfaced before him said that this was a game.

[Welcome to Elder Lord.]

[Please check your status window.]

[Your starting point is Orcrox Fortress. Good luck.]

The message windows disappeared once Ian checked them. Once again, the lush forest that seemed like reality stretched out before him. Ian idly wandered and saw a puddle. A small squirrel that was sipping water fled when it saw Ian.

Ian confirmed his appearance in the water. He was a huge monster with green skin and huge tusks protruding from his rough face.

[Status Window]

Ian, Novice Orc.

Level: 1

Achievement Points: 0

Assimilation: 50%

Abilities:

Orc's Strength (Common)

Orc's Recovery (Common)

He was an orc.

The users could select from the following list of species: the humans, elves, dark elves, dwarves, gnomes, and the orcs. Unlike the other species that had an appearance similar to humans, the orcs looked like an in-game monster. Their appearance couldn't even be customized like humans.

Therefore, Ian chose it. The reason was simple: he wanted to surprise Yiyu.

However, when he opened his hands and checked his green skin and thick fingers, he felt uncomfortable, as if his soul was occupying the body of another being. The weight and center of this body was different from reality. It seemed like time was required

to become more familiar with this body.

Sometimes animals would discover Ian and run away. Ian chased after them and dived in pursuit. He managed to grab a rabbit.

This body was heavy, but fast. The density of its muscles was different from humans. This was a strong orc.

Ian looked at the spires of the castle that were rising above the trees in the distance.

‘The cradle of the orc warriors, Orcrox Fortress.’

It seemed like he needed to go there. Ian walked in the direction of Orcrox Fortress and disappeared into the forest.

After Ian left this place, a new player appeared out of thin air. He also looked around like it was his first connection.

“Ohh, this is Elder Lord? Really? Doesn’t it look like the real thing? This is a virtual reality game.”

“Let’s see... Put it in the ear... I do this...”

“Uh, I’ve connected. What do I do? Species? Orc. A man should be an orc... What? Do it again?”

“What? Wasn’t it in the introduction of the game? Why is an orc an error? A species that the game manufacturers accidentally opened? A dog-like species? The orcs of Elder Lord are too weak? People don’t choose them as a species? There is no one? None? Really none?”

“They all reset before level 5? No... Yes, you what?”

“Are you trying to be vicious to the NPCs, like a villain who steps on the underpaid contract workers below you? It is okay since this is a game? Users are much better than NPCs? Puhahaha. I understand.”

“Understood. Then, I will be a human. I’ll say it again, it is a lot of effort.”

Chapter 3 – Maker’s Mistake (2)

As Ian approached the wall, two orcs in chain armor stood tall like stone statues. Their blades flashed in the sun.

They discovered Ian and laughed. They were laughing, but due to their tusks and their heinous appearance, their faces seemed evil.

“Hey, are you alive?”

“I’m alive. I came here to become a fellow warrior.”

They burst out laughing. It was a unique tone caused by their stomachs shaking. Ian gulped at their overwhelming momentum. He had once been a soldier, but he couldn’t help but shrink back at the two monstrous orcs side by side.

One of the orcs held out a fist.

“...?”

Ian looked at the rough hand blankly before realizing it was a greeting. Ian also made a fist and bumped it against each other. The orc guard smiled and said,

“Anyway, you have arrived at Orcrox and I wish you good luck. Today there is a funeral where we will remember an honorable

warrior. Kulkul. Stay alive.”

They shouted to open the door. The walls were high enough to cover the sun, and the giant door that was the size of the building started to slowly open. The door opened with a thunderous sound and Ian was able to see the inside of Orcrox Fortress.

“Ohh...”

Ian thought of orcs as savage monsters, since their appearance alone was heinous. But that wasn't it. The scale of the buildings were different. There were tall buildings around the giant tree in the center, with bridges in the sky connecting each one. Above his head, orcs were busy going to and fro.

It felt like the city of elves in a fantasy world! There weren't just warriors with weapons or shamans with staffs, but various orcs, such as merchants, in order to form a civilization.

It was a magnificent landscape that was more realistic than reality. The orc fortress filled Ian's view.

“This is really a game...”

“Hey, you're alive. Are you new?”

Passing orcs smiled at the stunned newcomer and held out their fists. Ian bumped them with his fists.

Whether he was alive or not, it didn't take long for him to realize that it was the orcs' greeting. All of them asked each other if they were alive, meaning this was a place where life and death occurred often enough for it to become a greeting.

Ian didn't know what to do after entering Orcrox Fortress, so he checked the interface for beginners tips.

[If you selected an orc, can you really endure it?]

[If you are a beginner, look for Instructor Lenox at Orcrox Fortress.]

“Lenox...?”

It was at that moment.

“Uh, a user? Wah, a real user?”

There was a loud and gruff voice, but the tone was light. Ian turned his head and saw a shabby looking orc.

“This is the first time I've seen another beginner orc. It's nice to meet you!”

He tried to shake hands before grunting and putting out his fist like the other orcs. Ian smiled and bumped his fist.

“Are you alive?”

“I’m alive. Haha, by the way, did you just start playing? What’s your name? I’m called Grom. I got it from a character in an old classic game.”

“Yes. I’m Ian.”

Ian nodded. Ian then discovered something on the other person’s forehead. A white star was shimmering in the middle of his forehead.

“That...?”

“What?”

Grom followed Ian’s gaze to his forehead.

“Ah, this. You don’t know? The white star allows you to identity the users. Ian has one on your forehead as well. That’s how I knew that you were a user. NPC’s can’t see it, only we can. This is really the first time I’ve seen it.”

“Is that so?”

“There are even some who hide it to pretend to be NPCs. You must have really started without investigating anything.”

“This is the first time I’m playing a game.”

“I see. Be careful, this is a big deal. Elder Lord is a really hard game so you should look at the tips.”

He nodded and smiled.

“Of course, you didn’t see it, which is why you picked an orc.”

“Huh?”

“It’s nothing. Are you going to see Lenox?”

“That is what the tip said.”

“Let’s go together. I was about to start heading there now.”

Ian followed Grom.

Ian was immersed in the sight of the city. Orcrox Fortress was filled with all types of things. There was a market and smithy. It was a realistic scene that couldn’t be thought of as a game as merchants shouted about their goods, adventurers gathered to fight monsters and orcs drank alcohol.

Ian started to think differently of Elder Lord. The game system seemed to have a personality and story for each character. A civilization and culture was created for the orcs. It was a wonderful game.

As Ian immersed himself in the world of Elder Lord, Grom laughed.

“Isn’t it amazing?”

“Yes. I can’t believe this is a game. How...”

He couldn’t believe that what he was seeing, hearing and feeling now was a game.

“Oh, there is a funeral.”

“Funeral?”

“Orcs are mourning the death of a great warrior. He was a great NPC who sacrificed himself to protect his allies.”

Suddenly, the faint sound of a horn could be heard.

At that moment. The entire Orcrox Fortress became quiet.

“Ah...?”

All the orcs were silent. Even the merchants shouting at the market and the drunkards became silent. The horn rang out slowly in the midst of this quiet. All the orcs looked at the center of Orcrox Fortress.

There appeared to be an altar made of bricks with an orc body lying on top of firewood. The orcs started humming in bold tones. It was a thick, subdued tone, like the humming of the Tibetan monks. The entire Orcrox Fortress was filled with the beat of the funeral procession.

At the bottom of the altar, the orcs presiding over the funeral started to slowly beat the drums. The sound of the horns and the drumming and humming of the orcs mixed together. The warrior's body caught on fire, the flames consuming the body of the dead orc warrior. The orcs held a ceremony in remembrance of their own.

“Ah...”

Ian was shocked.

A ceremony to honor their comrades.

He was reminded of a soldier on the battlefield. Cornell had become a star in the sky due to rebel bullets, and his colleagues had sent him away with bright smiles instead of sad tears. The song chosen wasn't a tranquil song, but an army song. Nobody cried

that day, but their hearts and minds were overflowing with hot and sad emotions.

The memory of that day was revived.

The humming of the orcs was grand and noble. Ian couldn't take his eyes off the burning orc warrior. The mournful cry of the horns wandered throughout Orcrox Fortress.

Ian didn't know the name of the orc, since he was just a character in the game. However, it is clear to Ian that he was a great and respected man.

“Ah, noisy.”

Ian's mind snapped back at Grom's words. Grom was grumbling beside him.

“A funeral should proceed quickly and quietly. Ahyu. Right?”

Ian looked at him blankly.

Did this person really feel no emotions when seeing this scene? In a world that seemed more real than reality, could he throw away the solemn ceremony of the orcs just because it was a game?

Ian turned his gaze once again to the burning body of the orc warrior.

[Assimilation: 50%]

[Assimilation: 51%]

[Assimilation: 52%]

.....

Ian didn't know about the changes in his status window.

-Hello! I am a helper to help you live a comfortable Elder Lord life, Yoojung!

-I am Jaehan!

-Today we will talk about assimilation rate. Jaehan-ssi, what is your current assimilation rate?

-When my condition is good, it is over 50%. On average, it is 40%.

-That is amazing. I am usually 30%. An average user is between 30~40%, so Jaehan-ssi is capable.

-Hahaha. Still, I don't want to get hurt when fighting, so I often end up limiting it. At 50%, I feel dizzy like I am actually hit by a knife.

-In fact, I usually play at a limit of 20% due to that.

-Oh, that is worse.

-Hihihi. Anyway, what is the assimilation rate of the viewers? The survey results say that the average is between 30~40%. In the case of high rankers, especially those who are roleplaying, it may be up to 70%.

-Amazing, don't they seem to be properly immersed?

Tremble tremble.

-In particular, the most popular roleplayer, user Kim Dalkwang of the militia, has released his latest status window. His assimilation rate is a huge 73%.

-Whoa! Is that how he became a ranker?

-The game publishers didn't disclose how the assimilation rate affects performance, but it certainly has an effect. It is common sense that rankers have a higher rate of assimilation, since the assimilation rate determines the ranker's abilities. Their skills,

attacks and movements are superior in every way. Doesn't this narrow down the difference between NPC's and users?

-Ah, scary NPCs! I don't like NPCs!

-Haha. Is that so? That is why users are attempting to create a village! I interviewed Elaine, an elf user who designed Shangri-la, the village of users...

A restaurant staff member changed the television channel.

“Eh, the world is going crazy for games...”

Jung Yiyu, who was immersed in the contents, recovered. Her friends who she was eating together with also turned their heads away.

“What is your assimilation rate?”

“I'm around 20~30%?”

“I've gone over 40% but I'm usually around 30%.”

Jung Yiyu laughed, “I am 10%!”

“Hey, what is this?”

“Do you only play with the right side of your brain while the left side is sleeping?”

“It’s a game. The thought of it being a game keeps me from being immersed... Well, I did level up.”

“You died to a rabbit.”

“What? How did a rabbit kill you? Is that possible? Do rabbits even attack?”

Yiyu sighed.

“I don’t know. I tried to attack it, but the rabbit bit my legs. I was constantly bitten by the rabbit and died from severe bleeding.”

“Amazing.”

“Crazy...”

Jung Yiyu laughed.

“But don’t worry. Now my troubles are over, since my brother has started playing the game.”

“Ah, that brother?”

“Yes. Oppa will become a high ranker quickly and take care of me. I will catch up to all of you.”

A friend who was listening interrupted her, “Why will he become a high ranker?”

“My brother is a soldier.”

“Soldier?”

“Will a soldier be more familiar with something like Elder Lord?”

“There are plenty of army men.”

“He was in a real battlefield, not a normal soldier. Do you know the foreign troops? He shot people in the Middle East and Africa.”

“Really? Then he has killed people?”

Everyone’s gaze turned to Yiyu, who shrugged.

“I don’t know, he doesn’t talk about it...”

“Amazing. A friend of my brother’s is a martial arts player and adapted immediately. Isn’t he a ranker now?”

“Hey, Jung Yiyu. Don’t pretend not to know me later.”

Yiyu shrugged at her friends.

“So be good to me.”

However, Yiyu didn't know one important thing about Ian, whom she was putting all of her expectations in.

He chose the orc that was called the game maker's mistake.

Chapter 4 – Instructor Lenox (1)

“Kuheook!”

Ian fell to the ground.

The orc warrior, Instructor Lenox, laughed at them.

“You guys came to become warriors?”

“Keooooook...”

Lenox grabbed Grom’s neck.

“You! Don’t overrate yourselves! Orcs! Keep your head up!”

Lenox pushed his face right up to theirs and shouted,

“Look at these soft limbs! You aren’t orcs! Humans! Elves! I can even believe that you are dwarves!”

Lenox then threw Grom, who moaned as he rolled across the floor. The orc warriors that were training laughed at them with their distinct voices.

When Ian and Grom first told Lenox that they wanted to be orc

warriors, Lenox asked them,

“Why do you want to be a warrior?”

Ian and Grom looked at each other. Grom replied within a minute,

“I want to become stronger!”

The Orcs, a fighting species. They were strong warriors who worshiped fighters and never bowed to the enemy! It was a textbook answer, and to some extent, it was true.

Lenox's eyes widened at Grom's response. He nodded, and then punched Grom and Ian. Now they were being beaten up.

“Why, why are you doing this...?”

Even if it was virtual reality, they still felt pain. The amount of sensation was deducted in accordance with one's assimilation rate, but the pain itself still existed. Grom sounded like he was going to cry from the beating. Lenox and the other orc warriors once again laughed at Grom's voice.

“The sissy is crying now! That's it, meek orc!”

Lenox raised his fist once again and Grom crouched down. Lenox smiled and put down his fist.

Then he turned and looked at Ian. Ian was bracing himself while standing up. He shook due to the sense of pain that he had forgotten for a while. It really felt like he was being beaten. He started swaying.

“Hey you! What about you?”

“Huh?”

“Did you come here because you wanted to become stronger like him?”

Ian felt a sense of déjà vu.

Lenox resembled the instructor of the foreign troops. The instructor had asked the recruits, ‘Why did you come here? What reason do you have for jumping into the firing line?’ There were many answers, but the instructor just laughed and kicked them.

Then Ian replied,

“To protect my younger sister.”

Their parents had died, leaving no money and inherited debt. He had to protect his little sister. He, who only had a body that learned martial arts. He turned towards the battlefield.

The instructor had nodded at Ian's reply and kicked Ian in the stomach.

"Do it well."

The instructor had muttered softly instead of laughing.

As Ian recalled that time, he stared into Lenox's eyes. Lenox no longer seemed like an ugly monster in a game. He was a warrior, an instructor. A mentor to the orc warriors. It wasn't the time to joke right now.

He stared straight into his eyes. Lenox wasn't the type who required a typical answer in a game.

"That's right."

"Hoh."

"Become stronger..."

Ian said firmly.

"To protect my precious people."

He was sincere, Ian had truly started this game for Yiyu. He had learned on the battlefield that the world was a heavy place. The

wars were just a proxy for the politicians.

Lenox laughed at Ian's answer and then he slammed his fist into Ian's abdomen.

“Heeok!”

Ian clenched his teeth and persisted. His waist folded, but his legs didn't collapse.

“Everybody get up.”

Lenox's voice was heard and Grom stood up. The two people stood in front of Lenox. Lenox looked at Grom first.

“If you want to become stronger, never cower.”

“Yes, yes!”

“Straighten your waist.”

Grom tightened his waist. Then Lenox looked at Ian.

“You want to protect your precious people?”

“That's right.”

“Right now, you can’t even protect yourself, let alone your precious people.”

Lenox grinned.

“Remember today’s helplessness.”

[You have become an orc apprentice warrior!]

[Become a great orc warrior with the teachings of Instructor Lenox!]

[10 achievement points have been acquired!]

The message windows opened. Grom looked like he had received the same messages.

Lenox made a gesture to follow him. They entered a large stone building that was beside the training grounds.

“Anyone who wants to become a warrior will need to stop by here.”

He waved his hands and the dark interior lit up.

“These are the great warriors who have entered the Hall of Fame.”

The lit torches revealed multiple statues surrounding them. They were several times larger than actual orcs and were delicately sculpted to look as if they were alive. Ian once again admired the level of civilization of the orcs.

The statues stood proudly with their weapons, including an axe, a hammer, a mace, and a morning star. Lenox asked,

“Who do you want to follow?”

The message windows popped up.

[Please select your role model!]

[The orcs believe in intuition and following the pull of the soul.]

[Your weapon will depend on this choice.]

[The weapon can be changed at a later time, but for the time being, you will proceed with the weapon and skills that you have chosen.]

It seemed like they were now choosing their weapons. Ian methodically examined the statues. The statues looked down at the center of the circle, making him feel like he was making eye contact with those legendary figures.

Ian suddenly felt an intense gaze and turned his head. One of the statues that was holding a huge greatsword was staring at Ian. Even though it was a stone statue, Ian's heart pounded as it seemed as if the eyes were actually looking at him. But that wasn't the only thing that surprised Ian.

He was a human.

"That human...?"

Lenox replied,

"Leyteno."

Lenox walked towards the statue of Leyteno.

"He walked the path of a warrior like us and was the only human to become a brother of the orcs."

"This human?"

"A long time ago, when the humans betrayed us and broke the

covenant, Leyteno fought with us against their greed and hypocrisy. He was a warrior who knew honor, a true warrior who never compromised when faced with injustice and never abandoned faith. Every time he wielded his greatsword, the blood of the enemies would gush out like a river.”

Lenox extended this fist. The statue of Leyteno stayed still, but it seemed like he met Lenox’s fist.

“We respectfully call him the master of the greatsword.”

[You have chosen a great warrior, the master of the greatsword, who became the brother of the orcs in human form, Leyteno!]

[Your weapon is a greatsword.]

[Skill Greatsword Technique (Common) has been acquired.]

[Status Window:]

Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior.

Level: 1

Achievement Points: 10

Assimilation: 53%

Abilities:

Orc's Strength (Common)

Orc's Recovery (Common)

Greatsword (Common)

His weapon was automatically designated by the system, but Ian didn't panic, as he had wanted to choose Leyteno. He was a human, but he chose an orc as his character. He felt a sense of connection to Leyteno, who had become a brother of the orcs in human form. In addition, Ian had learned the sword from Baek Hanho.

[Due to your basic skills, the proficiency of Greatsword Technique (Common) has increased. As proficiency accumulates, you can upgrade it to the Uncommon rating.]

How did his game know that he had previously learned swordsmanship? The system was truly elaborate.

“Grom has chosen Gloin, whose axe is said to have split apart a whole mountain.”

“The axe is good.”

“That’s right. The axe is a basic weapon for all orc warriors. Kulkulkul.”

Lenox laughed. He also carried an axe on his back.

“Follow me.”

After they left the Hall of Fame, Lenox pulled out their weapons from the arsenal next to the training grounds.

[The Old Greatsword (Common) has been acquired.]

It was difficult to hold the heavy greatsword.

Unlike other games, Elder Lord didn’t have an inventory. It was a game that eliminated user convenience for extreme realism. Even considering the size of the orcs, he would have to carry an oversized greatsword from now on.

Grom also wobbled as he held his axe. Grom whispered,

“We aren’t orcs for nothing. Ow, this is a really brutish weapon.”

“That’s right.”

Ian swung the greatsword in the air. Still, the strength of an orc could be seen.

“I guess you like it, you little ones.”

Lenox said with a laugh, “But I wonder if that will be the case after listening to my words.”

“Huh?”

“From now on, you will swing your weapon at the training grounds.”

They stood at the training grounds. In addition to the two users, there were numerous orcs training with their weapons. The axe and halberd boasted the highest proportion of wielders, followed by hammers and maces. A greatsword like Ian’s was rare.

They looked at Grom and Ian like they were a spectacle.

“Look at my posture.”

Lenox took Grom's axe and demonstrated. It was a clean 'downward blow'. Lenox repeated the technique again. Then he showed a 'two-handed slash' with Ian's greatsword.

"Repeat this."

"How many times?"

"Until you are satisfied."

"Huh...?"

Lenox gave a loud laugh,

"If you are satisfied, then come find me."

Lenox said before leaving. The other orcs gathered around Grom and Ian and laughed,

"Kulkulkul. It is starting again!"

"Kulkul. Hey, newbies. Let me tell you one thing!"

"Yes?"

"Instructor Lenox has never been satisfied once."

“Then what...”

“Your should learn it with your body.”

The orcs laughed again,

“Kulkul. Lenox’s new sheep, stay alive!”

“Kuhahaha!”

“Ahh...”

Grom sighed. He took the axe and swung it a few times in the air before stopping.

“Ian.”

“Yes?”

Ian was familiarizing himself with holding a sword again.

“Are you going to continue today?”

“Yes.”

“I’m a little tired, so I need to logout and I’ll search for a few attacks. Ah, being an orc is more exhausting than I thought.”

“I understand.”

“Then have fun, I’ll see you later.”

Grom gradually disappeared as he logged out.

At that moment, the other orcs became nervous. How did the orcs perceive his sudden disappearance? The orcs clicked their tongues as they saw Grom disappearing.

“What, someone who received the curse of the stars?”

They asked Ian,

“Are you the same?”

“Huh?”

“Have you been cursed by the stars?”

Help came while Ian was worrying about the answer.

[In the world of Elder Lord, users have received the ‘curse of

the stars.']

[Sometimes they are summoned by the Abyss and due to the curse of the stars, they are revived after dying.]

[Those who received the curse of the stars can be released from the curse by building up achievements and receiving 'God's forgiveness.' If they can't, they will be destined to suffer forever in the Abyss.]

[If NPCs know that you have been cursed by the stars, then you may be discriminated again.]

[Whatever the method, everything in the world of Elder Lord is your choice.]

Ian immediately understood the situation. The curse of the stars was a setting created to explain the users logging out and their revival after dying. He nodded at the maker's foresight.

Ian replied honestly, "That's right."

"I see."

They didn't say anything else. In the world of Elder Lord, NPCs felt reluctant towards the users cursed by the stars.

Ian paid attention to his greatsword again. He recalled Lenox's movements. Even if his weapon was a sword, Lenox was a great warrior. Right now, to Ian, Elder Lord wasn't a game, but a new world.

He was a newcomer cursed by the stars who was sweating to become an orc warrior.

“Kuaaah!”

“Hiyahhh! I'm alive!”

“Bul'tarrrr!”

A burning spirit rose up inside Ian as he heard and saw the orcs sharpening their skills.

Ian wielded his sword.

Chapter 5 – Instructor Lenox (2)

Tips for surviving on the battlefield.

First:

All skills must be engraved into the subconscious and used according to one's instincts.

It would be too late if one thought through an action in their head. A decision can't be made in that short moment, so one's actions should be automatic. Only training and constant practice can make this possible.

Some lazy recruits just trained until they fell over in exhaustion. It was in order to survive. Of course, most of those recruits were killed or wounded in the first battle. After falling, they realized the sweat was actually blood and felt regret.

Ian was well aware of this, so he never put down the greatsword.

“Newbie, how do you feel?”

“Is he the apprentice? Kulkulkul.”

Ian didn't rest even when the sun set. If other users saw it, then they would just consider it repeating the same action; however, for

Ian, this was real life training.

He was a warrior. He would soon meet monsters and swing the sword at the enemy. He knew there was no luck on the battlefield, just his own skills and abilities. He stretched his body. He wanted to fall down. However, he kept on wielding his greatsword.

“Uraaaaaah!”

A clean cut.

“Huaaaaat!”

Ian repeated his actions of cutting and stabbing.

“Are you still continuing?”

“Welcome!”

After a while, Lenox came up to him. Ian jumped up and took an alert posture, causing Lenox to shake his head.

“There is no need for that.”

“Yes!”

“Try it again.”

Ian breathed in and grasped the greatsword again. All of the muscles in his body screamed. His waist was bowed.

“Waist up!”

Lenox shouted. Ian fixed his posture and wielded the greatsword.

“Don’t drop your head! Look ahead! Look at the enemy!”

“Uwaaaaah!”

“The enemy won’t care for your circumstances! It is hard! So what? Nobody cares! Get rid of your weaknesses!”

“Uraaaaat!”

“It is hard! Don’t relax! Swing the sword! Bigger!”

“Yiaaaaaaack!”

“Repeat it! Continue! Until you forget how to breathe!”

Ian repeated his actions. Under Lenox’s teaching, he polished the basics of swordsmanship he learned from Baek Hanho, such as stabbing and slashing. Lenox further enhanced this.

“Continue! Squeeze! Of course it will be difficult!”

“Huaat!”

“If it weren’t so hard, then everyone would be a warrior!”

“Uraaaaaah!”

“Not everyone can be a warrior!”

Lenox and Ian yelled passionately. This passion was passed onto the other orc warriors.

“You there! Are you going to fall down when that newbie over there hasn’t?”

“No!”

“I think not! No! Then why are you still down there!”

“I will stand up!”

“If you are going to fall, then crawl out of the training grounds!”

“I won’t!”

“You can enjoy the rest of your life! Now swing it!”

“Bul’tarrrrr!”

The orcs started to wield their weapons while shouting. Those who collapsed during the sparring got back up and rushed at each other.

Lenox’s yells and the orc warriors’ cries rang out through Orcrox Fortress. Those who passed by the training grounds turned their heads with surprise.

Ian forcibly raised his body after he fell.

A smile emerged on his face. He hadn’t felt this feeling in a long time—the pain caused by fighting to the limits—that feeling when the pain was transformed into pleasure, and sharing this feeling with his colleagues!

[Amazing! The orc warriors have recognized the fighting spirit of the orc apprentice warrior.]

[The strength to fight without giving up, the indomitable spirit is the best virtue for orc warriors.]

[Warrior’s Spirit (Common) has been acquired.]

[Your willpower is more than just mere fighting spirit. Warrior's Spirit (Common) has been upgraded to Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)!]

[30 achievement points have been acquired.]

[Your level has risen.]

The message windows popped up but Ian shook his head and didn't even read them. This moment was more important than that.

"Newbie! What is your name?"

"I am Ian!"

"Become a warrior! Then you will receive a new name!" Lenox shouted.

The ugly visage of the orc seemed to be smiling.

"So I won't remember your name!"

"Yes!"

"Become a warrior!"

“I will!”

“Swing it properly!”

[The proficiency of the skill Greatsword Technique (Common) has risen.]

[If you continue building up proficiency, you can upgrade Greatsword Technique (Common) to the Uncommon rank.]

Ian wielded his greatsword like crazy. If this was reality, then it would be harsh training. However, it was a game, and he felt like he was gaining the nature of the orc species. His limits were constantly being renewed and developing.

There was no gain without suffering.

He understood why people avoided orcs. They were a truly hardcore species.

In the distance, he saw someone’s wrist being cut off in a spar. They paused for a moment before sprinkling a potion on the stump and reattaching their arms. Then they once again picked up the halberd.

“I’m alive! Bul’tarrrr!”

The spar resumed.

Ian couldn’t help but laugh. The training of real men that was hard to believe!

Once Grom returned to the training camp, he discovered orcs collapsed on the ground.

“...What is going on?”

Grom asked Ian who was lying on the ground.

“Grom is right.”

“What?”

“Orc, it is hard.”

Ian chuckled slightly. As the ugly orc’s face twisted, Grom nodded shakily.

“Oppa, did you start the game?”

Yiyu asked him. Her brother Ian was stretching his shoulders like they were stiff.

“Yes.”

“What? More information! Where?”

“It is a secret.”

“Ah, why is it a secret?”

“It is only for my heart.”

“Okay, I don’t need to know right now. A noob, noob. You are just a complete novice.”

Ian laughed,

“Then what level are you?”

“Me? I...um...”

Her voice trailed off before she blurted out,

“I am a pretty and cute elf mystic.”

“I asked for your level, not your species and profession...”

“A wonderful elf mystic.”

“.....”

“So you know.”

Yiyu raised a finger to her mouth like she wouldn't answer any more questions. Then a voice interrupted them.

“Boss-nim. It is done. Here.”

“Thank you. Now, your sweet potato latte.”

Ian's shop, Cafe Reason, had a student working part time. Her name was Yeo Rira, and she was charming with a pretty appearance. It was the reason why Yiyu took the cup with narrowed eyes.

“Hrmm...”

“You should go to school.”

“There is still plenty of time.”

“I don’t have time.”

Ian gestured with his chin. Yiyu looked back and saw that a group of female university students were entering the cafe. She looked at Ian and whispered,

“Hrmm...”

Yiyu’s eyes narrowed again.

“Boss-nim. Should I get the order? Do you want to take a break with your sister?”

“No, it’s okay.”

“Yes.”

Yiyu pulled out a 500 won coin and put it on the counter.

“Calculate it.”

“500 won is just for standing in the line...”

“You sell a lot,” Yiyu said before leaving the cafe.

Ian looked at her back and laughed.

The group of female students approached. Ian stood at the counter. In the meantime, they were talking among themselves.

“I was lucky to meet a party yesterday in Elder Lord. The party leader was a high level person. His female companion was also a high level, but they were lacking people.”

“How good.”

“It was the first time I actually saw a high level. They were also hunting orcs.”

“Wow, orcs?”

“The orcs charged with axes and bloodthirsty eyes. However, the party leader cut the orcs, leaving only the remains behind. It was completely amazing, I was enlightened yesterday.”

“I’m envious. When will I be able to do something like that? They aren’t rankers?”

“This is a chance, a chance.”

Ian’s eyebrows twitched.

“Uh, Boss-nim! Hello! We came again.”

“Boss-nim, our exams are over.”

Two of the females talked to Ian in a friendly manner,

“...Yes.”

“We’ll have a warm Americano, cappuccino...ah, two cappuccinos. And...”

Ian nodded.

“Yes.”

“...Boss-nim, is something wrong?”

Ian was famous as a warm-hearted cafe boss who always smiled gently, but a cold wind was blowing today.

“No.”

“Uhh...”

“I’ll let you know when it is ready with the bell.”

“Yes...”

Ian muttered as they turned around,

“Bul’tar...!”

Ian tilted his head.

After the drinks were served to the customers, Ian opened his phone. He needed to become as strong as possible to defend his sister. However, he couldn’t find any tips on playing as an orc. Rather, there was only talk about how they quit being an orc.

[Author: From Orc to Elf]

Title: I quit being an orc.

I tried it because I thought that other people just didn’t play it well.

The conclusion is: never play as one.

Aren’t things like production, administrative work, and farmer available for females with weak hearts or those who don’t like combat? They can work under NPCs. This is why it is said that Elder Lord has implemented a true fantasy life.

However, there is no such thing for orcs. You can only be a warrior or a shaman, almost unconditionally.

In addition, users pounce when they see orcs... The funny thing is that the high level users of other races and the orc beginners areas overlap. Aren't high level users killing orcs to gain levels and get items? NPCs are okay, since they can fight the high level users. But users?

We are treated as mobs from the start. If the NPCs can barely manage to win...we can't handle them. Although it is realistic for people to die, it is too much when they treat us orcs as mobs instead of people.

I'm exhausted.

The conclusion is that orcs can be raised as a character in other games, but Elder Lord is different. It is hard, there are no users, and it isn't fun.

Choose a human or an elf, and then your eyes can look at something better. Isn't love also possible? Why else is Elder Lord 19+? Huhuhuhu.]

└ Experienced an Orc: They are a trash species

└ I am a Legend: In the first place, they were just a mob that was mistakenly opened up as a species. The system is too complicated, so the game makers couldn't fix it.

└ Jarapapa: Orcs are a mob ^^ They're honey for the high level

users. They give decent achievement points.

Ian confirmed the content and comments.

“These bastards...”

He had felt the passion of Lenox and the orc warriors, so calling them mobs was just nonsense. At that moment, another orc related post appeared. The title, ‘I am an Orc.’made Ian click it right away.

[Author: Anonymous Orc.

Title: I am an Orc.

I am an orc. From the start, I wanted to be an orc warrior or orc shaman.

Actually, I was a human, but then I encountered a NPC and reset. I was a high level user. I was dirty and dishonorable.

An orc is much better than a lousy human. It is hard, but...being an orc is much better than being a human. They have an ignorant side, but they never stab anyone in the back.

Well, I’m not going to be a ranker, but I can get rid of my everyday stress. Just think about it if you are considering starting.

Actually, I am an orc, but this isn't something that ordinary people can do. It is hard. It isn't a game, but hard work. Training is a basic part of the action. But whether it is fighting or working hard, their fighting spirits explode.

Only a true man can challenge it.

I hope that someday, users will come to see the orc area. You will see an orc player carrying twin axes. Let's share a greeting if we ever meet (bump fists).

Of course, if you are a human, then you will die.]

└ Our Local Human Leader: This cocky mob shouldn't mess with me.

└ Peanuts are Amazing: It is great ㅎㄷㄷ. Masculinity ㅇㅈㅇㅈ. Of course, if humans or elves use the same amount of effort ㄹㄹㄹ. What a vain effort.

└ Anonymous Orc (Author): You are truly dirty humans.

└ Don't be an Orc: I saw your post and tried being an orc ;;; I quit.

Ian nodded. That man was an orc.

However, he couldn't find any knowledge on orcs. There were no tips and it could be called a species filled with NPCs.

When Ian looked at other species, he found all types of tricks, scams, and introductions to NPCs.

Some NPCs couldn't be tricked, due to their high artificial intelligence, and some discriminated against those who were 'cursed by the stars.' As a result, a keyboard battle often occurred on the forums. The discrimination against users by NPCs despite it being a game caused chaos. There were many philosophical debates on morality and ethics.

There were even situations where users were deceived and cheated.

Ian shook his head.

"Humans are dirty too..."

One of the female students watching him shook her head.

"Boss-nim is weird today..."

Chapter 6 – Mutant Hunt (1)

Ian and Grom passed Lenox's test.

Grom brandished his axe a few times and went to Lenox, where he was beaten and started training again. Meanwhile, Ian didn't go to Lenox and stayed at the training grounds.

Therefore, a week passed by in reality like this.

Thanks to the brain acceleration system, one day of reality was five days in Elder Lord. A time acceleration of five times was applied. Thus, Ian reported the same thing for more than a month in game time.

Ian, who repeatedly trained himself, and Grom, who acted like a normal user, couldn't progress in the game for a month.

Ian realized the severity of the orc species.

Who would want to spend a month doing the basic foundations in a game? They trained repetitively everyday until they collapsed from exhaustion. It was natural that there were no users.

Then Lenox called Ian and Grom over.

“Now you are a little usable.”

He looked at Ian when saying this,

“Of course, you are still greatly lacking.”

This time he looked at Grom.

Ian and Grom had become an attraction in Orcrox Fortress. Both of them had become synonymous with fighting spirit. Ian trained diligently, while Grom had the habit of going over to Lenox, being beaten, and then going back to training without giving up.

“I’m still not satisfied, but that would take another 100 years, so you will now receive your first mission as an apprentice warrior.”

“Yes!”

Finally, a mission. Ian and Grom looked at each other and smiled.

“Recently, wolves have appeared to the south of Orcrox Fortress. There seems to be a shortage of food, so the orc farmers are suffering damage.”

Orc farmers. They were fresh words.

“It is suitable for both of you who desire to become warriors. Hunt the wolves and help the farmers.”

[Lenox has given you a quest.]

[The first quest. I am cheering for you. Get rid of the wicked wolves that are threatening the good-natured orc farmers!]

[You must help them!]

[First, look for the orc farmers outside of the fortress.]

[The compensation for the completion of the quest is Lenox's recognition and achievement points. Depending on your accomplishments, there might be something more...]

A quest window was created. Grom's eyes moved like he was also seeing it.

“Now, start.”

Then Lenox yelled at the orc warriors at the training grounds as usual.

“Don't give up! Jump! Forget about your breathing! Do you want to be comfortable? Then quit!”

“We are orcs!”

“Bul’tarrrrr!”

“Being comfortable isn’t for a warrior! Comfort makes you weak! You will only grow through pain! Fight!”

“Uwaaaaaah!”

Ian nodded.

“Really cool.”

“That is cool?”

Grom shook his head.

“I am enthusiastic.”

“I still haven’t adapted to being an orc. Speaking of which, Ian-ssi seems like you have received training like this before. Do you work out?”

“I was a soldier, a professional soldier.”

“Aha. So that’s what it was. Now I understand. Your tone and behaviour naturally fits this place. I am currently worrying over whether I should continue as an orc.”

“Come on, I will be lonely if you leave me alone.”

“Kuk, then I will stay because of Ian.”

Grom laughed.

He felt like a friendly neighborhood friend or younger brother, but he had the threatening face of an orc.

“Shall we buy some items?”

“I have no money.”

“Ah, that’s right. We can earn money by doing the wolf quest and by selling the loot we pick up. Let’s eat delicious food at that time.”

The meals at the warriors’ barracks tended to just be cafeteria food. Surprisingly, the orcs’ diets were quite palatable. Their diet was similar to that of normal people, except that they had a higher proportion of meat and that there was a lot of food.

As Ian and Grom left the fortress, the orc guards greeted them.

“Hey! It’s the newbies. Are you alive?”

“I’m alive.”

Ian and the guard's fists met. Grom also shared the greeting with the other guard.

"You must've been trained properly by Instructor Lenox! Now you have a bit more flesh on you."

The orc guards laughed,

"Is it a wolf hunting mission?"

"That's right."

"I see. Be careful. Lately, there have been direwolves blending in with normal wolves."

Grom was surprised, as they were a pretty powerful monster. Ian asked,

"What if we run into them?"

"Look at the situation and run away if it is dangerous."

The orc guard raised his finger with a serious expression.

"Keep this in mind. To survive is to be strong. Boldness isn't courage, so if you are in danger, don't be stubborn and run away."

“I understand.”

“Kulkukul, come back alive.”

Ian and Grom left the fortress.

Wolves were dangerous beasts. Ian was well aware of this.

However, he wasn't worried.

He glanced at Grom walking next to him. Big and burly.

He was also an orc, but the orc's solid body and tight muscles made catching any wolf-like beast seem simple in comparison. Although they were only slightly taller than humans, their bodies were twice as large as an adult male's body. They also had thick limbs, making them seem like gorillas.

“Are these wolves different from those in reality?” Ian asked.

“They are usually similar. Animals are almost identical to those in reality. Elder Lord is difficult due to the monsters and other species being really strong.”

“Then can’t the orc farmers deal with the wolves?”

Ian lifted his forearm and showed his biceps, which were at a Guinness world record level. Grom laughed.

“That’s true, but there may be something unusual like the direwolves among the wolves.”

Ian suddenly turned his head. He was nervous, but it was just a roe deer.

The roe deer often ran off when they saw the two orcs. A bird perched on the roe deer, causing both the roe deer to buck and the bird to fly off. The bird seemed to be playing a joke on the deer.

It was a beautiful sight.

The world of Elder Lord, which sometimes seemed more realistic and beautiful than reality, was inspiring. As he played Elder Lord, Ian seemed like he was really becoming an orc apprentice warrior.

Ian muttered the orc slogan,

“Bul’tar!”

It was a word that orcs always repeated. It was the ancient orc word meaning, ‘life’. Chanting this seemed to clear his mind.

Grom laughed,

“Ian will become a role-player later on.”

“Role-player?”

“Immersion is important in Elder Lord, as is the assimilation rate. There are many people who make a drama by acting like real NPCs. It is popular on TV and the Internet.”

“Kulkukul, I can’t do that.”

“Look, look at that smile. Sometimes I can’t help but think that you’re a real orc. Your assimilation rate must be high.”

Ian jumped, as he could feel eyes watching them. This gaze was different from those from the animals. It resembled the ferocious gaze of the enemy on the battlefield. Ian’s body tensed up.

“Uh, what is it?”

“Who is there?”

“Who?”

Grom looked around.

“There’s nobody...”

He walked towards a bush as he looked around. The forest was filled with tall bushes and trees blocking the field of view. As Grom waved his hands in front of the bushes, hands appeared and gripped his neck.

“Uwah!”

“Who?”

Ian drew his greatsword. Grom floundered and missed his axe. The owner of the arms gradually left the bushes, revealing his appearance. He had a rough face with protruding tusks. He was an orc.

The orc asked, “Who are you?”

“...I am an orc.”

“I see that. Kulkul.”

The orc stepped on Grom’s axe that had fallen to the ground.

“Are you thieves who stole these weapons?”

Orcs could also be thieves. Ian shook his head.

“No.”

“Then?”

“We are warriors.”

“...Really?”

The orc narrowed his eyes.

Ian added, “Apprentices.”

“It is hard to believe. No matter how young, you look too weak to be warriors.”

The orc pressed harder against Grom’s neck. Grom struggled frantically.

“Okay. Then who is your instructor?”

“Lenox.”

“Oh, he is a very friendly instructor. Isn’t that right?”

“Lenox isn’t friendly at all.”

“Hrmm. I guess you know Lenox.”

He let go of Grom, who fell to the floor with a loud cry. The orc then hit Grom’s head.

“Be tense, Trainee. You should’ve expected something to emerge from the bushes.”

“Kuock...”

“These days, there are many orc bandits. Everybody has lost their honor.”

Grom stood up while wiping away his drool.

“Who are you?”

“Me?”

The orc puffed up his chest.

“I am Grant. A farmer.”

“...Farmer?”

“I work honestly and sweat while gathering the grain.”

Ian gave Grom his axe.

“It is nice to meet you.”

“Ohhh...”

“Grant. We’ve received a mission from Lenox to help the orc farmers.”

Grant burst out laughing. “You guys?”

“We might be weak, but we can still help. I heard that there is a problem with wolves.”

“Yes, that is true, but will you be able to help?”

“Believe in Lenox’s eyes, not us.”

“Indeed... Lenox wouldn’t have sent just anyone.”

Grant considered for a while and nodded.

“I understand. Follow me.”

They followed Grant. A log cabin was built not far away. There was a fence built around a field that wasn't large. Two small orcs were using farm equipment in the field.

“Hey, are you alive?”

“Daddy!”

“Father!”

The little orcs ran forward.

Cute.

Considering the orcs' horrible appearances, he wouldn't have expected to think they were cute, even if they were young. However, any animal would be considered cute as they looked with wide eyes at the person patting their head.

The little ones discovered the two unfamiliar orcs and became wary.

Grom glanced at them before the introductions started.

Ian and Grom introduced themselves. The eyes of the young eyes shone when they heard that Ian and Grom were warriors who came to help Grant.

“A warrior, how awesome.”

“Warrior! Stay alive!”

They pretended to wield weapons like the warriors. Grant snorted with an affectionate expression.

Grant also had a wife living in the log cabin. She was an orc that couldn't be called pretty, but she greeted them with a gentle face. Ian and Grom were treated to her warm stew.

After only having cafeteria food, Ian and Grom hurriedly ate the stew. Grant's wife gazed at them happily before suddenly saying to Grom,

“You are a good person.”

“...Huh?”

Grom raised his head.

“But the world is pushing you.”

“What are you...”

“Make the right choice.”

It sounded like a zen riddle. Grom looked at Grant with a puzzled expression. Grant explained,

“My wife has magic eyes that can weakly see destiny. It would be better to listen to her.”

“Yes...”

This time, Grant’s wife turned to Ian and said,

“You were born with the soul of a warrior.”

“Thank you.”

“But your soul has been greatly hurt by something.”

“...Huh?”

“You gave up the warrior’s path because of this pain... However, you picked up the weapon again in order to protect others.”

Ian was stunned. Did this NPC just read his past? He got into an argument during a war meeting and was discharged, and then he started playing this game due to his sister. Could the virtual reality system read his memories?

She gently laughed,

“I don’t know the details, but I feel like I should say this. Do what you believe in with courage.”

Ian and Grom both had confused expressions on their faces. Grant burst out laughing.

“Kulkulkul. You must be surprised. What are you going to do if you are surprised at just this? You have to go with me to catch wolves.”

“Huh?”

“Didn’t you come to hunt the wolves?”

“Grant, you’ll go as well?”

“It’s my job, I have to go.”

Grant pointed to a wall, where a halberd was hanging.

“I can catch all the wolves alone, but I encountered an enemy that I need your help with.”

“What is it?”

“A mutant wolf.”

Grant lowered his voice.

“He’s just a wolf, but his size is bigger than any direwolf, and he is very smart. He had started moving the wolves methodically. That is why the farmers have recently been damaged by the wolves.”

“Ah...”

“Your help is needed. I have faith. Kulkul.”

Grant’s wife looked at him with concerned eyes.

“Don’t worry. I’m not someone to be killed by wolves.”

“You...”

“Just cast your spells. The sweet blessings like your lips.”

“Be careful.”

The two of them gazed at each other with affectionate eyes and kissed lightly. Grom dropped his eyes, as if the sight wasn’t great, but Ian watched them as they quietly whispered to each other. It was like watching a sad scene of lovers in a movie. Orcs had their own love life. A smile appeared on Ian’s face.

Ian nodded.

“We will do our best to help you.”

“Um.”

Grant laughed,

“Your eyes are alive. Bul’tar!”

“Bul’tar.”

Grom noticed and followed them quietly.

“...Bul’tar.”

“The look in your eyes is dead.”

“I am alive. B-Bul’tar.”

“Dead.”

Chapter 7 – Mutant Hunt (2)

After the meal, the three orcs set out from Grant's cabin.

[You have received the blessing of the orc shaman Andara. Physical strength and combat power will be improved for half a day.]

They received a buff from Grant's wife.

“Please be careful.”

The party was led by Grant and headed further and further away from Orcrox Fortress. The dim forms of other orc farmers could be seen coming and going. They followed after, and saw the houses and fields of other orcs.

“The orcs originally didn't do farming of any sort,” Grant explained as he waved to the other farmers.

“However, one day, there were orcs that committed to farming. There were many orcs who resisted, but I was impressed by the fact that they were honestly sweating as they harvested the crops.”

“Were you originally a warrior?” Ian asked.

He got that impression when he first saw Grant.

“I was.”

“Ohh... Did Lenox train you?”

“He did. Lenox was frightening and strict, even back then.”

Apparently, Grant was older than he looked, meaning that Lenox was considerably older.

“Shh. Kill off any sounds, we’ll soon be in their area.”

Grant was extremely wary of the wolf chief. Wolves could be seen in the distance, and looked like like they were guarding their territory. Their patrols consisted of a systematic movement that was difficult to expect from animals. Ian gulped as an unknown anxiety welled up inside him.

Even if the numbers were the same, there was a large difference between dealing with rabble and dealing with organized soldiers.

Grom said, “Let’s just run in before they get away.”

Ian shook his head.

“No.”

“They are just wolves.”

“There is something strange, it’s like they’ve been trained.”

“Trained?”

Grom cocked his head in confusion. Grant, who had been listening in on their conversation, nodded and looked at Ian.

“You are a trainee, but you seem to have some combat sense.”

“It’s nothing.”

“They aren’t just wolves, since the wolves led by the leader act as if they’ve been trained. If we just barge in, then numerous wolves will surround us.”

“Then...”

“This is giving me a headache. We can resolve it if we just catch the leader...”

Ian started thinking. In a war, it was common to split up to divide the enemy’s attention. In order to reach the boss, something needed to grab the wolves’ attention.

“Let’s try to attract their attention.”

“How? Do you mean to split up?”

“Rather...”

Ian grinned.

“The enemy of our enemy is our friend. Are there any other predators nearby?”

“Hoh...”

Grant laughed and nodded like he understood Ian’s plan.

“I see. You know how to use your head. Moreover, I even learned something from you.”

“What does that mean?”

Grom was confused because he couldn’t understand the conversation happening before him.

“Let’s use another guy, a guy who was driven away because of the pack of wolves.”

They found an animal other than the wolves. It was stronger

than the pack of wolves, but was a good opponent since it was alone. They found a tiger.

“A tiger? We have to deal with a tiger and a pack of wolves?”

Grom was terrified.

“Dealing with one tiger is better than fighting a pack of wolves.”

“What are we going to do after catching the tiger?”

“We’re going to use it to lure out some wolves before entering and hitting the leader.”

They wandered around the forest for a while before finding the target. A tiger was sitting on a rock and yawning. The trio hid themselves in the bushes.

“Stun the tiger.”

“How?”

“Hit its head really well.”

Grant formed a fist.

“.....”

Grom shook his head. The tiger felt the three approaching orcs' presence and rose from its spot. Ian, Grom, Grant, and the tiger. Three versus one.

It was Ian's first battle in Elder Lord. Ian felt a good sense of tension wrapping around his body. It was the feeling he felt on the battlefield. He felt the muscles of his tough body stir and became confident that he could deal with the tiger.

The tiger roared, its low frequency cry reverberated throughout the earth. Grom's feet were shocked stiff. The tiger noticed this fact and instantly jumped at Grom. The tiger's body flying through the air was immensely large, causing even Ian to flinch for a moment.

"Grom! What are you doing?!"

"Ueeh...!"

Grom closed his eyes and waved his axe, the blind attack failing to reach the tiger. The tiger's paw pushed against Grom's shoulder as it opened its mouth. Ian calmly struck the tiger, aiming for the mouth, and causing the tiger to fall back, unable to bite Grom.

Its bloodthirsty eyes turned to Ian. At that time, Grant dramatically swung the halberd and struck the tiger's back. The impact was delivered through the thick skin, shocking the tiger.

“Don’t kill it!”

“Yes!”

Ian ran and hit the tiger’s head with his greatsword as the tiger threw its head back rebelliously. Grom also regained his mind and beat the tiger with the opposite end of the axe. The three orcs started to beat the tiger.

“Yip! Yelp! Yiiip!”

The tiger howled like a dog and crouched down, its eyes filling up with tears. It seemed like its earnest eyes were asking them to stop. Grant faced it and laughed and hit the tiger’s forehead with a fist.

“Yip!”

The tiger was stunned. It was a really brutish sight.

“Hoo, this guy wasn’t such a big deal.”

[You have overpowered the tiger.]

[You have beaten the pitiful tiger that was chased out by the wolves until its fighting spirit rose... You have taken one more step into the world of the orcs.]

[10 achievement points have been acquired.]

[The proficiency of Orc's Strength (Common) and Greatsword (Common) has increased.]

He checked the message windows. If his proficiency kept rising, then eventually, his skills would be able to enter the Uncommon rank.

“Now, let's drag this guy over to the wolves.”

The three people carried the stunned tiger on their shoulders. It was like they were recreating the training scenario where soldiers ran carrying logs. They headed back to the wolf territory where the wolves were patrolling in a cyclical route.

It was clearly a systematic method. Ian tensed up again.

They were wolves, but this was the world of Elder Lord, after all. Their abilities were possibly incomparable to those of normal wolves. The organized behavior already indicated that it was somewhat the case.

“I will send this friend in.”

Grant touched the tiger's head as it lay on the ground to check if the tiger was listening.

“Hey, wake up.”

Grant spoke, but the tiger’s eyes still didn’t react.

“Did you hit it too hard?”

“Is it dead?”

“No, it’s still breathing.”

Grant struck the tiger’s cheek successively with one hand. It was a sight that would normally be impossible to witness happening to a tiger, also known as the king of beasts. Ian thought that the orcs really were an amazing species to achieve this amazing feat.

“Grrowl...huoong...”

The tiger’s eyelids shook. As soon as it opened its eyes, Grant hit its face again, glancing back while the tiger was recovering.

“N-Now!”

“Huaaaat!”

“Uraaaaat!”

They picked up the tiger and threw it into the middle of the pack of wolves. The tiger flew through the air. Still, the tiger had the senses of a cat and landed on its feet.

“Grrung?”

The wolves were amazed to see the angry tiger appearing out of nowhere.

“Grrrrr...”

One glanced over before giving a long howl.

“Awoooo....”

“Awoooooooooo....”

The other wolves came running.

The tiger quickly grasped the situation and confronted the wolf pack. Its fighting spirit wasn't bad as it glared at the wolves with an arrogant attitude. The wolves were beasts, but the tiger was the king of the beasts. It circled around the wolves, causing them to step back a little bit.

It was a dignity that couldn't be imagined. The tiger opened its mouth, as if it was mocking them, and roared loudly.

“Kuaaaang!”

The wolves panicked and withdrew, starting to call the other wolves over. Now there were dozens of wolves surrounding the tiger like ants. The wolves threatened the tiger with their numbers, but it didn't lose its dignity. It truly was the king of the beasts.

Ian was touched.

“That guy, Simba...”

“That guy's name is Simba? How do you know?”

“It's just the name I gave him...”

“I see...”

Grant nodded.

“Now that you've given him a name, he isn't just a tiger anymore.”

“.....”

“For Simba, we have to hit the leader over there.”

“Let’s meet again, Simba.”

Grom looked at Ian and Grant with a strange expression. As the wolves were distracted, the three orcs moved slowly towards the leader. The roars of the tiger and the wolves’ whining could be heard from behind them.

After moving through the forest, they reached a rocky hillside. There was a wolf on top that was watching the fight between the tiger and the wolves. It had black fur and looked larger than the average wolf.

“It’s that guy.”

“Indeed...”

Something outstanding was felt from him.

“Once we get rid of that guy, peace will return to the farmers.”

“Catching a tiger, and now one wolf...”

Grom firmly held his axe and raised his body. The wolf discovered Grom and bared his teeth. Even though it was a long distance, the sound of the wolf growling rang inside their ears.

The trio walked towards the hill. The wolf didn’t try to escape, instead descending the rocks with leisurely movements. However,

he didn't come down on his own.

“Grrrrrung...”

As the wolf snarled, other wolves appeared from behind the rocky hill. There seemed to be around 10 of them. The black wolf led the wolves to surround the three orcs.

“These guys, aren't they different from the earlier wolves?”

These wolves were all bigger, the atmosphere around them was fiercer, and their fangs were all sharper. They were a group of elite wolves. Ian raised his greatsword.

“Watch the wolves.”

The wolves rushed in first.

There was a pincer attack performed on the orcs. The wolves were fast. One of them jumped in front to lure Ian's big sword, and as he swung it, another wolf pierced the gap in the attack and aimed for his side.

“Ugh!”

Grom and Grant were also struggling. Ian elbowed a wolf in the head while hoping that he could deal with his share quickly.

The pain in his side woke up his sense of realism.

“Pant, pant... Is this really a game?” Ian muttered as he watched the leader wolf’s oppressive face retreating.

The burning pain in his side that he could feel right now was no different from what he felt on the battlefield. His spirit flared up. It was easy to understand why people said that Elder Lord was difficult, and that being an orc was hard. The fighting in Elder Lord was just like fighting in reality.

However, Ian had lived in one of the harshest realities.

He could see Grom rolling on the ground. Ian’s eyes stung at the sight. He wanted to help, but he needed to subdue his own opponents first. He couldn’t afford to be careless.

Ian first stepped forward. The wolves withdrew as Ian’s sword moved forward, sideways, and back while exposing gaps where he could be bitten. The number of wounds on his body increased.

At that moment, one wolf came flying. A wolf that had been sliced by Grant’s halberd bumped into a wolf confronting Ian. As they flinched, there was a gap that Ian inserted his sword in. It pierced the wolf’s belly and penetrated its internal organs.

“Yip, yiip...!”

The wolf cried out as it started trembling. Ian kicked the wolf’s

head with his feet and the wolf fainted. Ian pulled out his sword, revealing a blade covered in the wolf's blood.

“Now it's your turn.”

Ian laughed. The remaining two wolves frantically rushed at Ian. One bit at Ian's right arm while the other aimed for his lower body.

Kwaaack.

The wolf used its momentum to try and chew Ian's right arm off in one go. Ian lost his grip on the greatsword due to the bite.

“This bastard...!”

Ian punched the wolf's head with his left hand. The wolf's bite was broken with a loud whine. The other wolf was still hanging onto Ian's legs, but Ian just continued to punch the first wolf. Eventually, the wolf's skull caved in.

Ian retrieved the greatsword and slashed at the wolf biting his leg. The wolf whined and retreated. Ian was drunk on the sense of fighting and swung his greatsword indiscriminately. Only the enemy and his sword were visible to him.

In the end, the wolf lost its head to Ian's sword.

“Pant...pant...”

Ian was also bloody.

Practice and training were vastly different from an actual fight. No matter how much someone trained in martial arts and prepared for battle, the pressure and stamina of an actual fight wasn't comparable to a spar.

Ian turned his head as his body sagged.

[Congratulations on your first bloody welcome as an orc! You want to fall from exhaustion, but the soul of a warrior has captured your body.]

[The Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon) has been used.]

[Orc's Recovery (Common) has been used.]

Grant was struggling. Ian had dealt with three wolves, but five were currently attached to Grant. Including the dead wolf from earlier, Grant had battled twice as many wolves as Ian.

“Help Grom!” Grant shouted. His voice grew louder as he fought. He looked like a warrior as he brandished his halberd with bloodthirsty eyes.

Ian found Grom. Ian's eyes widened in shock. Grom was twitching with a wolf biting at his neck.

“Grom...?”

Grom's eyes grew dim as he lay still like a corpse. Ian's eyes popped out as he ran forward roaring wildly.

“Groooooom————!”

Chapter 8 – Mutant Hunt (3)

Ian roared as he rushed forward, two wolves withdrawing in response to Ian's mad dash.

"Grom!"

"Ah...orc... Fuck...hurts..."

Grom muttered. Ian grabbed the fallen Grom.

"Steady yourself! Grom! Grroomm!"

Grom grinned with dim eyes.

"Ah... If I die, then my points and skills will fall..."

Ian's mind snapped back at Grom's words.

Ah, this was a game. Even if he died, Grom would just revive again. As he realized this, Ian's mind calmed down. His wildly beating heart sank.

"Sorry for not helping you..."

"It's nothing. I blocked my neck."

Ian tore at his clothes and bandaged the neck and other bleeding areas. A human would've died, but Grom had the thick skin and resilience of an orc.

“You would've died if you weren't an orc.”

“Crude...orc...”

“I'll take care of this quest.”

“Kukuku...please...”

Ian stood up.

It was just for a moment, but he had lost control when he saw Grom in a dying state. The memories and the helplessness of losing an ally on the battlefield had entered his mind. His chest seemed to collapse. He wanted to rip apart everything in front of him. If he was stronger, than he wouldn't have lost anyone.

[A warrior isn't a warrior because he is strong by himself.]

[A warrior proves his honor when he protects his friends, allies, and those precious to him.]

[Your fury has granted you the blessings of a warrior.]

[Your physical abilities will increase by 10% for 30 minutes.]

[You will only feel 50% of the pain for 30 minutes.]

The messages popped up.

Ian's eyes turned towards the black wolf still looking down and laughing at them.

“Just wait there, I'll go there soon.”

Ian then plunged towards Grant. Grant was skillfully dealing with the wolves as he avoided fatal injuries and attacked the wolves. Another wolf died, making it harder for the others to approach.

At that moment, Ian stepped in from the side and swung his sword, causing the wolves to howl and prance about. Grant and Ian didn't miss the gap in their defense as they wielded their weapons. The wolves were killed by one or two weapons.

Although the leader howled encouragingly from behind, the remaining wolves died. Ian and Grant pulled the wolves' fangs out of their bodies and cleaned up.

“Grom?”

“He isn’t dead.”

He pointed to Grom. Grom was sitting down and taking deep breaths while holding the bleeding area.

“He is an orc, so he could recover from that wound.”

“Now there is only one left.”

Grant and Ian held their weapons and approached the leader. The black wolf looked down at them from a rock.

“Now it is your turn.”

“Grrrung...”

The black wolf descended from the rock and stood before them. The wolf growled,

“Ugly orc bastards...”

Grant and Ian’s eyes widened.

The wolf had just spoken. The wolf smiled before raising his head and howling towards the sky.

“Awoooo....”

“Awoooooo....”

Then the wolf’s body started changing. His body swelled as its front legs rose up, becoming a bipedal walking creature. The shadow of the giant wolf suddenly completely covered Grant and Ian.

Werewolf!

They were a completely different species from wolves. While they looked just like ordinary wolves, they were cursed beings that could turn into bipedal wild beasts. He was twice as big as an orc. The nails of both his hands were long, sharp-like daggers, while the huge face had saw blade-like teeth. The vicious eyes turned towards Ian and Grant.

“Orcs appearing...on the subject of farmers...!”

Ian’s fighting spirit soared as he laughed and spoke without any fear,

“Shut up, dog scum. You just learned how to stand on two feet.”

“Kukukuk. These orcs always come to be bitten.”

Grant whispered,

“An advanced werewolf... He is a dangerous opponent. I’ve never seen one talk before. It must be a mutation.”

“Is he strong?”

“Strong.”

Grant laughed, “Anyway, I can’t run away. I’m going.”

His smile was just like someone else’s. It was Lenox’s smile. A warrior’s smile. The courage to smile before an unknown enemy was part of the spirit of the orc warriors.

Ian smiled back at Grant. “Good.”

“Did you say you were an apprentice?”

“Yes.”

Grant grabbed his halberd and stared at the werewolf in front of them. “You will be a good warrior.”

There was no need to say anything else. Ian and Grant rushed at the same time.

The werewolf was quick. He lightly avoided their two charges and aimed for their sides. The nails tore through the air like a

weapon. If his flesh was torn by that, it would be a fatal blow. Ian took a more careful attitude.

The werewolf giggled as he approached them.

“Kikik. I can’t taste orc meat. Grrung...”

“.....”

“A while ago, I chewed on orc meat and spat it out because it was too tough. Kukukuk...”

The werewolf looked at Grant and said,

“The name was...Abuchwi...”

Grant’s eyes widened.

“Abuchwi...dead?”

“I ripped him apart. Him and his family.”

The werewolf laughed.

“He was begging for the lives of his children...”

Grant ran forward and swung his halberd. The werewolf avoided it and aimed at Grant through a gap. Grant's chest was torn apart as the werewolf said with a giggle,

“...Stupid orc.”

Grant spoke in a despairing voice,

“Abuchwi was an honest farmer.”

“Orcs farming, kikikik, how funny.”

“What would a mutation like you know about honest labour and sweating in nature?”

Grant's eyes changed. An unknown power gathered in his body.

[The orc farmer Grant has been breathing as one with the land for a long time, realizing the joy of the harvest and the circulation of the ecosystem and nature.]

[As a warrior who lived the life of a farmer, he has gained a new enlightenment.]

[Grant has used Nature's Rebuke (Special).]

Ian saw an active skill for the first time. The basic skills that Ian possessed were all passive types. Furthermore, this was the Special rank! It seemed to be a deadly move in the game.

“Nature’s mistake! Mutant wolf, return to nature!”

He swung his halberd, causing the earth to shake. A powerful wave of energy was launched. A blow that contained the power of nature!

The werewolf flew back as if he was hit by a hammer, slamming into the rock behind him. There was a loud whine as blood emerged.

“So even a werewolf can whine.”

Grant approached the werewolf.

[A mutant werewolf that was born against the laws of nature.]

[For him, the blow that contained the power of nature was deadly.]

“This is the last one.”

Grant raised his halberd. It was at that moment. The werewolf,

who was in a critical condition, squeezed out the last of his strength and bit Grant. Grant grimaced and his body shook. As Ian ran over, the werewolf kicked Grant away. Ian caught Grant, the two of them tangling together as they rolled across the floor.

The werewolf watched Grant with glazed eyes.

“I...nature’s mistake?”

The werewolf sniggered.

“How funny, you garbage orc.”

The werewolf howled.

“Awooooo....”

“Awoooooooooo....”

Somehow, the howl seemed sorrowful. The werewolf turned away from Ian and Grant and limped away. The appearance of the mutant werewolf disappeared, with the blood showing his escape route. He wouldn’t be able to recover for a while.

“Grant, are you okay?”

“That guy...?”

“He escaped.”

“Huu... I didn't kill him in the end...”

Ian shook his head.

“It will be difficult for him to recover for a while.”

“Let's hope so... Well, it doesn't really matter.”

Grant laughed,

“Even if he reappears, the farmers will scold him.”

Ian burst out laughing.

[The mutant werewolf has been defeated.]

[Unfortunately, you were unable to kill it. The mutant werewolf will someday return.]

[After helping to solve Grant's problem, the name of the apprentice warrior Ian will become known.]

[You have acquired 30 achievement points. Your level has risen.]

[The title, ‘Friend of Farmers’, has been acquired. ‘Friend of Farmers’ will increase your familiarity with farmers and improve the efficiency of agricultural work.]

The message windows shone. Ian checked his status window.

[Status Window]

‘Friend of Farmers’ Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 3

Achievement Points: 80

Assimilation: 55%

Abilities:

Orc’s Strength (Common)

Orc’s Recovery (Common)

Greatsword (Common)]

Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)

Nothing had greatly changed.

Ian went up to Grom. He was sitting down and holding the bandage at his neck. Ian grabbed Grom's hand.

"Ah, what a surprise!"

"Wake up. It has ended."

"Oh, I saw the message windows. Too bad it wasn't killed."

Grom stood up. His neck had been pierced by a wolf's fangs, but he hadn't died. The orc's flesh was phenomenal.

"Let's go back."

"Today passed like this... It's rewarding."

The sun went down. As they were trying to leave the werewolf area, a loud sound was heard in the distance. It was the cry of a beast.

“This...”

“Simba...!”

They had forgotten about him. The tiger, Simba, was still fighting the wolves. They ran with their weapons out.

Ian and Grom opened their mouths in disbelief at the sight before them. Numerous wolves had been ripped apart. The tiger Simba was glaring at the remaining wolves, who bowed and slowly backed away with their tails between their legs.

Simba was bloody and was covered with all types of injuries, but he maintained his dignity as the king of the beasts. The stripes covering the tiger’s body were manly. Simba snarled and all the wolves ran away.

Simba roared at his victory.

“Kuheeeeeeeong...!”

“.....”

Clap. Clap. Clap.

Ian clapped as he watched the scene. Grant and Grom also clapped. The three orcs cheered as they watched the king of the beasts reclaim his throne. Simba bowed his head, as if he was

humbly receiving their praise.

[Simba, a tiger who once ruled this area, was pushed away by the wolves' tactics.]

[However, today he regained his honor as a tiger and returned to being the king of the forest!]

[Although it started with a beating, you have managed to form a hot friendship with the tiger.]

[The title, 'One who Respects the Honor of the Tigers', has been acquired! Your familiarity with tigers will rise, and you can feel some of the finer emotions of a tiger.]

He received the title and felt close to the tiger, Simba. He could feel pride and friendship in Simba.

“Simba.”

“Grrrung...”

“You are a true tiger.”

“Grrrrrung!”

The bold battle of the king of beasts who fought against dozens of enemies! A true tiger who slaughtered wolves with an unyielding will! Simba was a warrior. Ian extended his fist and the tiger bumped it with his paw.

“Let’s meet again!”

“Kuang!”

Chapter 9 – What People Live By (1)

The trio had a warm farewell with Simba before returning to Grant's cabin.

“Please deliver this for me.”

“This...?”

“It has been quite a while since I've last seen Instructor Lenox.”

As Grant's wife fed them warm food, Grant held out a letter.

“Thank you again for what you've done, the other farmers appreciate it as well.”

“I just did what I had to do.”

“You're already a warrior,” Grant laughed out loud.

They promised to meet again and left Grant's house. Their tension filled bodies finally relaxed. As they walked towards Orcrox Fortress, Ian and Grom looked at each other.

“Today...”

“Shall we call it a day?”

“Yes, it’s late.”

Right now, it was dawn in reality.

“We finally had an adventure in the game.”

“That’s right. Thanks to Ian, I think my life as an orc is going well.”

Grom thanked him. Without Ian, he wouldn’t have been able to complete this quest, and would’ve died.

“Tomorrow as well?”

“Yes, if nothing happens.”

“Then let’s meet again tomorrow.”

Ian and Grom smiled and bumped fists. Within a moment, their appearances blurred as their connection to Elder Lord was terminated.

“Boss-nim, did something good happen?”

“No, does it look that way?”

“Yes, you keep smiling. Did you get a girlfriend?”

Ian smiled at the inquiry.

“Look, there’s the smile again.”

“It’s nothing.”

“What? Something is strange...”

Ian was thinking about his adventure with Grant and Grom. They got rid of the mutant wolf and formed a fierce relationship between men. A smile appeared as he recalled Grant’s final blow to the werewolf and Simba’s indomitable will against the wolves. Ian had completely fallen for the charms of Elder Lord and the orcs.

He hummed as he imagined his next adventure.

Suddenly, Ian’s phone rang. It was his little sister, Yiyu, who should’ve been listening to lectures at school at this time. What was so urgent that she would call him at this time?

“Yes, hello.”

–Oppa...!

Her voice was urgent.

“What’s going on?”

–Oppa, you see... Right now I am at...

Ian’s face stiffened at Yiyu’s following words.

–The police station.

“...What for?”

–That...

Ian roughly heard the situation and took off his café apron.

“Boss-nim...?”

“I need to go out for a while, so please look after this place alone.”

“What’s going on?”

“Please.”

Ian left the café.

He got in his car and stepped on the accelerator, driving towards the police station close to Yiyu's university. Ian went inside and found Yiyu, who got up as she saw him. Her expression was grouchy. Ian hugged her.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes...”

“Are you uninjured?”

“Yes... I'm fine...”

“Then it's okay.”

Ian ruffled Yiyu's hair, causing her to quietly laugh. He turned his head and saw two men sitting down, both of their faces looking like a mess. One of them got up and greeted Ian.

“Hello. I am Yiyu's friend, Park Jungtae.”

“I've heard the story.”

Ian shook hands with Park Jungtae.

“And there...”

He looked at the man sitting apart from Park Jungtae.

“That person?”

He scowled at Ian and looked away.

Ian asked Yiyu, “What exactly did he say to you?”

“To me? Just... let’s have a meal today. Girls always agree when I promise to take them someplace expensive... He muttered.”

Ian raised his eyebrows.

“So you?”

“I stayed quiet, but Jungtae was next to me, and they ended up arguing...”

Fists ended up flying. Park Jungtae bowed his head like he was ashamed.

Ian sighed.

“Who struck first?”

“Almost at the same time...”

There were such moments. Just before a physical conflict, their eyes would meet and sparks would fly before they pounced at the same time. Looking at their faces, both of them seemed similar. It seemed like they thrashed around without actually knowing how to fight. There were no serious injuries or aftereffects.

Ian laughed as he looked at their faces. Yiyu poked Ian's side.

“Oppa, why are you laughing?”

“They are truly kids. Still, I'm glad that it wasn't a big deal.”

“This isn't a big deal?”

“Nobody is dead or maimed.”

“Please don't say such scary things, this is the police station. Won't Jungtae go to jail?”

“It'll be fine.”

An agreement would be reached by both sides. Ian looked at the men.

“The words he said to you... As a senior, is he usually like that?”

“Sometimes...he flirts, but I don’t care. It isn’t uncommon.”

Ian raised his eyebrows, causing Yiyu to laugh this time.

“What? Don’t you know that I get several phone numbers from men whenever I go outside? Right, Park Jungtae?”

“Uh...well...”

Park Jungtae answered with a gloomy expression.

Ian started laughing. So that’s what happened.

Park Jungtae and the other man were fighting over Yiyu. The level of injuries were similar, so it was likely to end with a mutual agreement. That’s why the police officers cleared a space for them to talk.

Ian told Park Jungtae, “You fought because of Yiyu, so thank you. Still, in the future, don’t swing your fists, even if there is an argument.”

“Yes... I’m sorry.”

“If that senior continues to bother you, then contact me.”

He handed Park Jungtae his business card. Park Jungtae's eyes widened as he saw the name 'Café Reason.'

"Ah, are you the boss here?"

"Yes. Do you know of it?"

"I heard the girls saying good things... The boss..." Park Jungtae smiled at Ian and continued, "He is kind."

"Come visit sometime."

Suddenly, there was a disturbance in the police station.

A middle-aged man was walking this way. There was oil on his face and he yelled as he walked, "Where is Sangho? Sangho! Yang Sangho!"

Ian had a bad feeling. The senior who fought Park Jungtae over Yiyu stood up.

"Yang Sangho! Hey, you stupid fool. Why did you get beaten up? You're a disgrace to my name."

"Father..."

“Yes, where is your opponent? Is it you?” He pointed to Park Jungtae. “You were hit by this child... Aish, you screw up.”

“.....”

“What was it about? This woman?”

Ian’s eyebrows twitched.

“Well, you both hit each other, so we can come to a mutual agreement. No, will that be enough? Should I call the police commissioner?”

The middle-aged man bragged as he raised his phone.

“Is that your guardian over there? That baby? Or that woman? Is that young man related to you? No parents?”

At that moment, the police officer in charge came back. His expression was heavy due to the disturbance.

“Oh, Guardian-nim. Please sit there quietly...”

“I should be quiet? I am a busy guy, yet I came all the way here, got it?”

“Calm down, yes?”

Ian, who was watching the scene, knocked on Yiyu's back.

“Go back to school.”

“Oppa?”

“Don't worry, I will handle it.”

“Still...”

“Don't you know that you won't receive your allowance if you're absent from school?”

“But...”

“I'll take care of Jungtae, so go.”

Yiyu nodded. However, she couldn't help looking at the middle-aged man with an uneasy expression. Ian placed his hand on Yiyu's head and grinned.

“Jung Yiyu.”

“Yes.”

“Don’t you know that I can solve things?”

“Yes...”

That’s right.

Her brother, Jung Ian, always solved her problems, no matter what happened.

When she was a child, she told Ian that children were harassing her, and they became quiet after a few days. Ian found her lost items and cooked whatever she wanted to eat.

After their parents passed away, she was uneasy about their inherited debt. However, Ian just smiled and told her to believe in him, and he dealt with it all alone. He became a soldier and paid off the debt, providing her living expenses and paying for her university tuition fees.

Seven years later, when he returned to South Korea, Ian was unchanged. He always solved her problems reliably. That was why Yiyu was forced to nod.

“Oppa, thank you...”

“If you want to thank me, help out at the café.”

“That is too much. Don’t you know that it’s the exam period?”

“I hope you do well on the exams.”

“Look forward to it.”

Ian ruffled Yiyu’s hair.

Yiyu said goodbye to Park Jungtae. Someone glanced at her as she left. It was the middle-aged man talking with someone over the phone.

“Why is that girl going? Isn’t she involved?”

“.....”

“W-What is that look?”

Park Jungtae was surprised.

Ian’s expression changed the moment that Yiyu disappeared. He seemed like someone who always smiled gently. That was the story he heard about Café Reason’s boss. A warm hearted man who was always smiling, making the customer feel stable the moment they saw Ian.

But that smile was erased the moment that Yiyu left. Now he looked like someone else.

‘My brother, he was a soldier. He used to fight in the Middle East and Africa.’

The words that Yiyu had said popped into his head. The conflicting images were now merging together.

The middle-aged man cried out, “You, you, why are you staring at me like that?”

“Don’t talk anymore.”

“Are you talking to me right now? Are you crazy? How old are you, you brat?!”

The police officer in charge said, “Both of you, please calm down.”

“Didn’t you hear what that brat said to me? Your boss, who is it? Do you know who I am? I am someone who eats with the police commissioner, understand? Hey.”

The middle-aged man searched through his wallet and pulled out his business card.

“I am a person who runs a company, you...”

“A brat who doesn’t even know shame.”

Ian approached. As Ian looked down at the man, he flinched and dropped his business card.

“Don’t you know shame?”

“Y-y-you, this...”

“Don’t you feel any shame when you look at your child?”

“Talking impolitely...”

The police officer inserted himself between the two of them.

“Now, now, calm down...”

The police officer flinched. He easily pushed the middle-aged man, but Ian didn’t budge. It felt like he was pushing against a large rock. The police officer glanced at Ian with surprise before sitting both of them down.

The middle-aged man regained his bravery.

“Call your boss here. Now, there’ll be a lawsuit, instead of an agreement!”

Jungtae’s face became pale. His situation at home wasn’t good, so

Jungtae hadn't told his parents. He had no knowledge of law and couldn't afford to proceed with a lawsuit. The middle-aged man seemed to have a lot of money. Just as he saw on TV, the middle-aged man would use an expensive lawyer and his connections to turn Jungtae's life upside down.

Then Ian said, "Jungtae."

"Yes Hyung."

"I'll resolve it, so don't worry."

Ian picked up the business card that the middle-aged man dropped.

The man was talking with someone on the phone. He was disguising his son as a victim and asking the person to solve it. The man made all sorts of promises like, let's play golf next time, he would buy them a drink etc.

It was sickening.

"You over there."

Ian called out to the senior who fought with Jungtae over Yiyu.

"....."

The senior raised his head. It was an ambiguous expression. His belief in her father along with the shame of the situation appeared on his face.

“Did you apologize to Yiyu?”

“.....”

“Apologize?”

The senior looked down as he shook his head. Ian waited for his answer.

Once he raised his head again, his face resembled his father who was oily and greedy.

“Why?”

“.....”

“You should be prepared to bow deeply in apology, along with that brat.” The senior exclaimed.

Ian started laughing, “That isn’t pride.”

“What nonsense are you saying?”

“You are ashamed of your father, but have decided to follow his actions.”

“Don’t speak nonsense.”

“Look.”

Ian pointed around. All the police officers and civilians had expressions of contempt on their faces.

“They are watching your father with that disgusted expression.”

“You asshole.”

“Later, those expressions will turn to you.”

The middle-aged man finished his call and got up.

“Do you know who I just called? That person...”

Ian ignored him and turned to the officer in charge. The police officer had a distressed expression on his face.

He was obviously disgusted at the actions of the powerful, but it was a world where innocent people would be sacrificed. A scenario where the student called Park Jungtae was in trouble was painted in his head.

“Inspector-nim.”

“Yes.”

“I’ll be back after a phone call.”

The cop looked at Ian. He, the man who was the guardian of the girl who caused the fight, was consistently calm. He felt something dignified in that attitude.

“Yes.”

He expected a possible reversal of the situation.

Chapter 10 – What People Live By (2)

“Did something good happen?”

“No, does it look like that?”

“Yes, you keep smiling. Do you have a boyfriend?”

Ji Hayeon smiled at her secretary’s inquiry.

“Look, you’re smiling again.”

“It’s nothing.”

“Suspicious...”

Ji Hayeon looked down at her phone. The recent call log displayed one unsaved number. She pressed the Save Contact button instead of just staring at it. The name was Raven...no, delete. She recalled the strange pronunciation that emerged from his mouth.

Ian. Jung Ian. That was his name.

She had met the man called Jung Ian a long time ago.

In the past, she had visited the Middle East for a business meeting

when she was kidnapped by an international terrorist organization. Having the heir of a huge company as their hostage was a useful bargaining tool for them.

Her eyes had been covered and her limbs were bound for several days. The only thing she could hear was the Arabic language and gunfire. She managed to soothe her burning throat with lukewarm water and pieces of bread. She tried not to let go of the string of hope.

It was a strange voice that saved her.

“Ji Hayeon, is that correct?”

After incredibly loud gunshots were heard, the door opened and she unbelievably heard someone speaking Korean. The cloth covering her eyes was released. Even though she was blinded from not seeing light for a long time, she tried to look straight at the owner of the voice.

There was a man wearing black tactical gear and holding a rifle.

“I have come to rescue you.”

‘Hostage secured (English).’ He said into the radio. Thanks to the call over the radio, she was able to figure out the man’s name.

Raven. The man was called Raven.

After being rescued by him, strangers from all over the world surrounded her. While escorted to the tactical helicopter, she trembled from a habitual fear. Were they really here to save her, or were they another criminal group? The painful hours of being held hostages sparked an obsessive fear.

As she looked down from the helicopter, she saw a battlefield.

One of the soldiers saw her pale complexion and spoke to the man called Raven, who then looked at her. He removed his helmet and goggles.

That single moment was engraved into Ji Hayeon's mind.

She never imagined that he would have such a gentle appearance. It was difficult to associate the fierce soldier with the gentle man. His kind eyes tried to reassure her while his clothes were covered with the enemy's blood.

“It's okay. You're safe now.”

She felt relieved as the man smiled at her.

“From now on, I'll protect you.”

He made her feel at ease. She started crying as all of her tension was released. The other soldiers heckled the man as he approached

and awkwardly patted her shoulders.

After returning to the base camp, mercenaries and officials dispatched from the Myeongsong Group were waiting for Ji Hayeon.

Ji Hayeon tried to express her gratitude, but she couldn't see the group of soldiers anymore. Nobody knew exactly who they were. Both her father and the chairman, Ji Eunchul, had sought out the best experts.

There was a rumor that they were a special unit from the UN, or that they were secretly run by the United States of America. There were even rumors that they were the private forces of a huge international group.

In particular, everyone was reluctant to talk about the man called Raven. Raven was seen as an incomprehensible demon or ghost, who was rumored to have been able to shoot the target in the forehead without making a single sound.

Even Chairman Ji Eunchul didn't know the exact truth.

She made a strong request and was able to briefly meet him before returning to South Korea. Ji Hayeon handed a note to Raven that contained her phone number.

“Please get in touch if you come to South Korea. I want to pay back this favor.”

He just gave her an ambiguous smile.

Since then, she had never forgotten his face.

Time passed. As the successor of the Myeongsong Group, every single day was busy. She thought of him whenever she was having a particularly hard day. Was he still fighting in foreign lands? She wondered if he was saving someone in distress like her.

Then today, she received a strange number on her personal mobile phone. Only a few people knew this number. She almost didn't answer as she thought it was a wrong number, but then an unknown feeling grabbed her. Once she answered the phone, she heard a soft voice that revived the old memories.

-Hello.

She was able to tell at once. It was him.

—Is this Ji Hayeon?

I am Raven.

She wanted to know why he was calling her but it was a minor matter. It was nothing really, something very trivial. To her, the problem would be like stepping on an ant. The ant would be stuck to the sole of her shoes.

“What are you doing now?”

–I own a café.

Ji Hayeon couldn't help exclaiming. A café. It was a place that seemed to fit him. A quiet and warm place.

When he said that he was sorry for bothering Ji Hayeon, she wanted to tell him to contact her at any time. However, she hesitated. She had never once chased after a man, but she couldn't afford to be proud now.

Ji Hayeon suppressed the laugh in her voice and said,

“I'm sorry but you'll have to pay me back.”

–How?

“That...”

She suggested like it was a trivial matter.

“Where is the café?”

Thus, she was able to find out the location of Café Reason. She also found out that his name was Ian, not Raven. Jung Ian, such an

ordinary name. She discovered that he had a pretty younger sister who attended university, and that there was a problem because of her.

He was a person who lived an everyday life. She felt a little closer to him.

Ji Hayeon wrote down each word on a memo and then handed it to her secretary.

“This...?”

Café Reason. Jung Ian. Jung Yiyu. A prestigious university. Several words seemed to be written randomly. The secretary looked at her.

“I want to know all of the information related to this.”

“I understand.”

“If the café is doing good business, the sister’s grades, the house where they live, the growth process, everything about their family.”

Then she added like she had forgotten.

“Oh, and the man at the bottom. He seems to be a nouveau rich person, so just push the problem away.”

“Yes.”

“Do not let that man do any harm to Jung Ian.”

“I understand.”

Her secretary grinned.

“This is my specialty.”

Ji Hayeon walked to the window. The building overlooked the entire city.

This was the headquarters of the world-renowned Myeongsong Group, the leading corporation in South Korea after launching Elder Lord. Ji Hayeon smiled quietly as she watched the scenery outside.

“You don’t look so good.”

Ian’s eyes opened at Hoyt’s words.

“Keep your composure. Any agitation in the heart will be revealed on the flesh.”

Hoyt was a warrior introduced by Lenox.

Grom said it would be difficult for him to connect for a while because he was busy. Therefore, Ian went to Lenox alone, who gave him a new mission.

Help the warrior Hoyt.

He was able to meet Hoyt at the entrance to Orcrox Fortress.

Hoyt was blind in one eye. He was a bald orc with a big scar and some tattoos across his face. He also sported a black eyepatch for his blind eye. Ian was nervous, as Hoyt's weapon was also a fearsome hammer.

However, after sharing a few words with him, Ian found out that Hoyt was a calm warrior.

“Have you done something that you don't want to regret?”

“How do you know that?”

“Inexperienced warriors reveal their emotions on their faces.”

Hoyt paused for a moment. They had been walking east through the sea of trees. Hoyt was heading to a small town.

“If you have a weakness, never reveal it. Your shaky mind can lead to impatience. If I were an enemy, I’ provoke you to run at me like a raging bull, and then I would take advantage of the large gap in your defense.”

“Yes...”

Ian nodded. Hoyt’s face distorted as he grinned.

“One day, you’ll meet an enemy stronger than you. However, never show any sign of weakness and always look for a way to escape or to win.”

“Why?”

“Your fear is a strength for the enemy. It’s the same with animals. As soon as you cower, you will become the prey, instead of the hunter. If they see your weakness, they will gain strength and try to trample on you.”

Ian nodded.

The world of Elder Lord was really mysterious. Each NPC seemed to have their own philosophy. This world seemed more real than reality. Ian learned more in Elder Lord from Lenox, Grant, and Hoyt than he did from reality.

“Then what about this expression?”

Ian had a mock confident look on his face.

“That’s worse.”

“Why?”

“Isn’t that a face that’s asking to be hit?”

They burst out laughing.

Ian eventually had to use an old relationship due to the problem at the police station. He was strong, so he hadn’t felt good about relying on someone else. However, he forgot about all of that after connecting to Elder Lord and meeting the orc warrior.

“What will we be doing?”

Lenox only told Ian to help Hoyt.

“That...I’ll let you know when we arrive there.”

They walked together and dealt with the occasional monster. Ian encountered goblins and direwolves, but he easily faced them. Hoyt defeated them casually.

Grant, who had repelled the werewolf, didn't seem to be a match for Hoyt. He was a great warrior and would need to be hit by a really high level user. He pointed to Ian's greatsword.

"Your swordsmanship is aimed to deal with humans or elves, right?"

"That's right."

"You'll need to act a little bit differently when you're dealing with monsters that aren't humanoid. Move more freely and believe in your instincts."

[You have been taught by the experienced warrior, Hoyt.]

[The accumulated battle experience and Hoyt's teachings have combined together and Greatsword Technique (Common) has evolved.

[Greatsword Technique (Common) has been upgraded to Orc's Greatsword Technique (Uncommon).]

[Your level has risen.]

[Status Window]

‘Friend of Farmers’ Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 4

Achievement Points: 80

Assimilation: 55%

Abilities:

Orc’s Strength (Common)

Orc’s Recovery (Common)

Orc’s Greatsword Technique (Uncommon)

Warrior’s Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)

His skill was upgraded and his level rose. Ian felt like his greatsword was lighter all of a sudden, and the large sword moved along his desired trajectory. Hoyt smiled at the sight.

“Always think. Don’t just repeat the actions like you do in the training drills. Think about what is more efficient and move.”

Ian had also heard this from his martial arts instructor, Baek Hanho. Did the creators of Elder Lord invite real martial arts practitioners to ask for advice? Ian nodded energetically.

“Thank you for your teachings.”

“It’s nothing. The duty of a warrior is to lead young orcs.”

They left the forest. As the thick trees covering their field of view disappeared, walls could be seen from far away.

[A free city where anyone can stay, Anail is the city of dreams.]

[You have moved beyond the territory of the orcs for the first time. 10 achievement points have been acquired.]

“Is this the first time you are seeing it?”

“Yes.”

“You’re a rural orc.”

Hoyt chuckled.

“This is the free city, Anail. It’s a neutral city where any species can freely come and go.”

“Then are there other species present?”

“Of course.”

Ian had never seen another species in Elder Lord, as he had only seen the orcs in Orcrox Fortress. There would be other users here. What would the humans, elves, and dwarves look like? Ian’s steps became faster.

A human was guarding Anail, the free city.

“Hello.”

“I am alive.”

Ian was disappointed.

The guards of Orcrox Fortress stood firmly like stone statues. The orc watchmen who were difficult to approach! But Anail’s guards looked like swindlers. This one draped his leather armor on a spear and leaned against the wall. He looked at Ian and Hoyt with a bad expression.

The guard signalled to open the gate.

“Well, go in. Orcs, go and don’t cause any trouble.”

“Thank you. Stay alive.”

“It sounds like you’re wishing for me to die. Are all orc greetings so weird?”

The guards started exchanging gossip about orcs. Ian’s face wrinkled, but Hoyt’s expression didn’t change.

Thus, Ian and Hoyt entered Anail, the free city.

The composition of the city was very poor compared to Orcrox Fortress. The scale wasn’t so big and there were many poor houses that seemed on the verge of collapse. There were also poor people begging for money. The orc farmers’ cabins looked like wonderful mansions compared to the houses here.

Hoyt laughed at Ian.

“You still can’t control your facial expressions.”

“Ah...”

“Compared to Orcrox, it isn’t a great place. It was originally a place where the fugitives of each species gathered.”

Humans, dwarves, and gnomes could be seen. Their appearance wasn't as nice as he imagined. They looked like the commoners in medieval movies. However, the beauty of the elves was extraordinary.

“Come along.”

It was a free city but orcs couldn't be seen. Ian and Hoyt received a lot of attention as they headed to a house in a corner of the city. It was a small and old house. Hoyt stopped.

“This place...?”

“Wait.”

Hoyt frowned.

“Something is happening.”

“What...?”

Hoyt pulled out his hammer.

“Prepare your sword.”

“Huh?”

Hoyt opened the door and entered the house. Shouting was heard from inside. Ian also entered with his greatsword. However, the situation ended without Ian having to help. A woman and two children were trembling in a corner, while the three human men threatening them were instantly subdued by Hoyt.

Hoyt stepped on one of them and asked, “Were you sent by Derek?”

“Kuock...that’s right.”

“Didn’t he say he would wait?”

“The promised time has passed! Thompson ran away!”

One of the children shouted instead of Hoyt, “No! My father didn’t run away!”

Hoyt chased out the men, who left while glaring at Hoyt.

“Damn orc bastard... Interfering again...”

“Don’t think that you’re safe! Derek will kill you!”

Hoyt nodded.

“I will be ready.”

“Let’s see, dirty orc!”

The men ran away. The children ran forward and hugged Hoyt. It was strange to see human children being held by an orc, but it was sweet. The woman who seemed to be their mother approached Ian.

“Are you Hoyt’s friend...?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you for your help.”

She bowed deeply. Ian didn’t know the situation so he looked over at Hoyt. He laughed and called Ian outside.

“You must be wondering what is going on.”

“That’s right. How do you know them?”

Hoyt explained the situation.

There was a man named Thompson, who was Hoyt’s friend. One day, Hoyt barely won after fighting some human bandits and was in a critical condition. He barely reached this place, but no one tried to help an orc.

However, the man called Thompson helped Hoyt. He sprinkled a lot of potions and took him home for treatment. Thompson and his family nursed Hoyt for a while. Therefore, Hoyt owed a life debt to Thompson.

Thompson and Hoyt became close friends.

“Thompson is a trader. At one time, he was the master of a good company, but he was betrayed by his business partner. While his partner’s betrayal was due to his nature that cannot feel doubt, that very nature also allowed him to survive.”

Thompson dreamed of a resurgence. Thanks to his old customers who remembered his personality, he was able to get another opportunity. His only problem was the issue of money.

“In the end, he borrowed money from Derek. At first, Thompson thought he was a pure investor, but he found out that Derek was just an unscrupulous loan shark.”

Thompson believed Derek and made the deal, but Derek suddenly turned around and demanded high interest. Thompson couldn’t refuse Derek. In the end, Thompson accepted Derek’s demands and left for a distant land.

The promised date with Derek was three months. Before leaving, Thompson had asked Hoyt for a favor. He would come back, so be sure to protect his wife and children until he returned. Hoyt believed him and waited.

“...When was that?”

Hoyt laughed bitterly.

“Four months ago.”

“.....”

“It’s already been over a month. Derek and his men started harassing the family, even before the deadline passed. They were going to make the missus a prostitute and sell the children as slaves.”

“Dirty...”

“I stopped by Orcrox to visit Lenox and something like this happened again.”

Then a girl ran out.

“Uncle Hoyt! Uncle I don’t know! It’s time to eat!”

A young boy held onto Hoyt’s clothing, as if he liked it very much. Hoyt smiled and the child laughed as he saw an orc’s smile.

“Enter first.”

“Yes! Come quickly! Let’s eat together!”

Ian smiled at the children’s bright gazes. He was reminded of Yiyu when she was young.

“Is there a chance that an accident happened to Thompson...?” Ian asked.

“It’s a possibility, since he had to travel through a dangerous place.”

“What will you do if he doesn’t come back?”

“...It doesn’t matter if Thompson doesn’t return.”

Hoyt pointed to his face.

Tattoos were covering half his face. Orcs who were recognized as a warrior had tattoos engraved on their body. They contained the beliefs of a warrior and had the power to strengthen the warrior.

“Thompson saved my life and is my friend. He believed in me and left his family in my care.”

Hoyt’s eyes were strong.

“A warrior never forsakes one’s faith.”

Faith. How long had it been since he last heard this word? In addition, the person said it with such strength. Compared to this orc, real human beings were ugly.

“So, young orc, will you help me?”

Ian stared into Hoyt’s eyes and nodded.

“Yes, I will do my best to help.”

Ian firmly bumped fists with Hoyt.

Chapter 11 – Intern Stella

“I can’t see the rumored rookie.” An orc remarked to Lenox as they stood at the training grounds.

It was a shaman wearing animal skin and holding a staff. Lenox nodded.

“I sent him to Hoyt.”

“Hoyt... I haven’t heard that name in a long time. Has he been doing well?”

“He’s gone away this time because he became friends with a human.”

“Human...”

The shaman touched his chin.

“It isn’t good to become entangled with them.”

“I hope the human he called friend is a man of honor.”

A few warriors greeted the shaman.

“Tashaquil! Are you alive?”

“Oh, I’m alive. Bul’tar!”

“Tashaquil!”

Tashaquil smiled and nodded.

“Hey, everyone’s alive.”

Just like Lenox was the instructor for the warriors in Orcrox Fortress, Tashaquil was the teacher for the shamans.

Beginner orcs often met with either Lenox or Tashaquil. The system determined the user’s alignment and suggested the way best suited for them. They were the two NPCs that could be called the starting point of the hell species.

Lenox stared at a collapsed warrior who jumped to his feet and started moving again.

“I see you’re still strict.”

“I’m treating them as warriors.”

Lenox laughed.

“Grant sent me a letter.”

“Grant? Didn’t he become a farmer?”

“He did.”

“I was expecting him to give up.”

“He selected that life for himself.”

At the time the Mutant Hunt quest was received, the system said that the compensation would depend on their performance. Ian and Grom didn’t know it, but the letter Grant wrote to Lenox resulted in a far bigger reward.

Tashaquil waved his staff and a blessing covered the orcs practicing at the training grounds. The warriors shouted their gratitude to Tashaquil.

“That blunt person wrote a letter. What does it say?”

“He gave me his regards and talked about the rookie.”

“He met the rookie?”

“Yes. I told them to help the orc farmers as a whole, but they ended up meeting Grant instead.”

“What’d he say?”

“That he’ll be a good warrior.”

“A good warrior...”

Tashaquil started thinking.

“I have seen many warriors. Good warriors as well. But not all good warriors go the same way.”

Tashaquil smiled and nodded.

“So you sent him to Hoyt?”

“That’s right.”

“Hoyt is an honorable man.”

“It’s enough as long as the rookie doesn’t forget the path of honor.”

“That is your answer, Lenox.”

At that time, an orc appeared in front of Lenox’s eyes. With a lousy rushing gait, it was Grom. Lenox laughed bitterly.

“There’s another rookie.”

“This one?”

“He isn’t reliable, but he’s coming along well.”

Lenox called out to Grom. Grom jumped. He became tense as he discovered Tashaquil, who had a fierce atmosphere similar to Lenox, standing on Lenox’s other side. Tashaquil waved his staff.

“I am alive. I am Tashaquil.”

“I am alive! Are you the shaman instructor?”

“You know me.”

Grom initially worried about whether he should become a warrior or a shaman. In fact, the system had proposed becoming a shaman, and told him to go to Basque Village to find the shaman Tashaquil. However, Grom himself chose to become a warrior.

Lenox told Grom, “The mission to help Grant turned out well.”

“Thank you.”

“But I’m still not satisfied. Are you satisfied?”

“Ah, no!”

“Yes. Never be satisfied with the present. I will give you a mission.”

“Alone...?”

“That’s right.”

Grom had learned through a whisper that Ian was on a solo quest. This would be the first quest that he proceeded on alone without Ian. In fact, it was thanks to Ian that Grom had made most of his progress as an orc. If it wasn’t for Ian, then he would’ve already quit.

The orc really was a hell species! What quest would he have to do alone? Grom gulped.

“I understand.”

“These days, a group of goblins are threatening the orcs. Go with the warriors to clean them up. Fight together.”

“Uh, when?”

“Now!”

Lenox pointed behind Grom. There were a series of warriors holding weapons. They grinned as they gestured to him. It was a fearsome sight to behold. Grom seemed like he was about to cry.

“I understand... Uhh...”

Tashaquil laughed as he watched Grom walking away.

“That guy’s going to be a warrior?”

“Anyone can become a warrior.”

“Kulkulkul. Indeed...”

“Tashaquil, a warrior isn’t born, but made.”

“You are still a romantic.”

“I just believe.”

Lenox grinned.

“I believe in the possibilities of all orcs.”

Ian walked around Anail.

Once he became recognized as an orc warrior someday, he would leave Orcrox Fortress and meet various other species. Just like he admired Orcrox's scenery, Anail was overflowing with NPCs with their own intelligence and personality.

In addition to the merchants at the market welcoming customers, he also saw the mercenaries of Elder Lord who would do anything for money. Orcs were rare in Anail, so Ian gladly bumped fists with them every time he met one.

“Hey, are you alive?”

“I'm alive!”

“This is the first time I've seen you. A warrior?”

“I'm still an apprentice. Shaman?”

“No, no, no. I am the much cooler warlock compared to a shaman.”

“Ohh... This is the first time I've seen an orc warlock.”

“Don't reduce the honor of the warlocks. I am a warlock.”

“Kulkulkul. I’ll be careful.”

“It is nice to meet you, Warrior. Warriors can be called the pride of the orcs. Become a warrior who knows honor, young man.”

“I understand. Bul’tar!”

“Bul’tar!”

The citizens glanced over at the two big orcs saying goodbye on the street.

Ian’s childhood memories returned as he wandered around the market. It was fun to follow his parents around at the market when they were alive. When they saw the young Ian, the adults at the market would give him something to eat.

“Purchase radish! Selling radish! Purchase radish! Purcha....eh?”

A woman screaming while holding a radish in both hands noticed Ian and her eyes widened.

“...?”

Ian looked at her as well. There was a white star in the middle of her forehead. A user. It was the first user he met apart from Grom.

“A user?”

“Yes.”

“Whoa, this is the first time I’ve seen an orc user. Wah, wah.”

She examined Ian with amazement. As she reached out to touch Ian, she realized that she was holding radishes in both hands and stopped.

“Do you want to buy a radish?”

“Kulkulkul. It’s okay.”

She laid down the radishes with regret-filled eyes.

“This is really the first time I’ve seen an orc user. Have you been playing for a long time?”

“Not that long. I’m a beginner.”

“I see. You should try a different race. I have friends who tried being an orc, and they all ended up quitting.”

“Kulkulkul.”

“You are like a real orc.”

A woman was selling a variety of vegetables on her own, with a sign saying ‘Anail Branch of the Blacksmith Company’ in front of her. Her eyes widened as she noticed where Ian was paying attention.

“Ahem, I am the successful applicant for the intern position at Blacksmith Company.”

“Intern?”

“Don’t ignore the interns. The Blacksmith Company is a large business in Elder Lord.”

Even in games, the preference for large companies remained.

“I’m going to become a legend of the business world and appear in [Elder Lord Times].”

[Elder Lord Times] was a program that talked about news in Elder Lord, as well as the rankers. Ian had watched videos of Elder Lord through this program before starting Elder Lord.

“Orc, what is your profession?”

“A warrior, although I am still an apprentice.”

“Truly an orc. How tough.”

The woman sighed, “It’s good that I don’t have to worry about fighting. But I have to sell all of this today...”

She glanced at Ian.

“Are you busy?”

“I’m not busy but...”

Now was his free time. Hoyt told Ian to explore the city.

“Then please help me.”

[Stella has suggested a quest.]

[The pay will be according to the results. There is a base salary of 5 silver and you will receive 30% of Stella’s dividends, depending on the sales performance.]

Stella’s quest! This was the first time he discovered that users could grant a quest. Ian looked at the woman, Stella, who was gazing at him earnestly.

“I’m an intern. If my performance isn’t good then I can’t switch to being a full-time employee!”

It was the sad reality. Anyway, it seemed fun so Ian nodded.

“I understand.”

“Did you see my name in the quest window? I am Stella. Orc, what is your name?”

“I am Ian.”

“That isn’t an orc-like name.”

Thus, Ian started to help Stella with her business.

“Purchase radish! Buy carrots! Selling cucumbers!” Stella yelled loudly. Unbecoming of her slim figure, she yelled like an amazon, but nobody looked back.

Ian watched Stella.

“Excuse me, Mister! Do you need a radish? This is a radish, a delicious radish! You can boil it, cook it, or even sell it! Buy it!”

“I’m not buying, not buying.”

“The aunty over there! Carrots! It’s great for your body! Good for your eyes, and rich in beta-carotene. Even children like them! Carrots are great, Aunty!”

“My kids hate carrots.”

“The pretty sister over there! Elf sister! Sister, do you like green peppers? Sister, how about a basket of green peppers?”

“...Step aside.”

Ian shook his head. Stella looked over at Ian with tearful eyes.

“What? You’re just watching and not helping. Do you think you’ll be better than me at this job?”

“Isn’t it just selling?”

“Yes, I went to a private school in order to pass the interview to enter the Blacksmith Company.”

“School?”

“There are many special schools for Elder Lord.”

If there were private schools for games, it would surely be in South Korea.

“I’m broke because I used my salary to pay for the private school’s fees...”

He was reminded of Yiyu when he saw Stella. Ian sighed and said, “Okay. I will lend you my strength.”

“Bah, will Ian’s strength make a difference? Will it turn carrots into beef? You would be a wealthy merchant.”

Desperate words poured out of Stella’s mouth as she started talking. Ian placed a dirt-covered carrot in her mouth. She tried to speak while spitting it out.

“Wha for?”

“Stella, please remember this.”

Ian puffed up his chest. He was a dignified and honourable orc.

“If you want to grab the mind of a person, be aware that 70% of communication is through non-verbal behaviour, not words.”

Ian moved Stella out of the way and sat down. The people passing by looked at the orc sitting in front of a vegetable shop like he was a spectacle. Ian didn’t say anything.

“.....”

At that moment, he caught the eyes of a passerby. The man flinched at Ian's intense gaze.

Green skin, grim expression, protruding fangs, and the huge size. It was a scary appearance. The man became nervous as Ian paid strong attention to him. An orc acting as a substitute in the market, what the hell was this? The moment that they locked eyes, the terrible orc started to lift something up.

Dagger? Axe? Hammer? Was he staring because he was going to do some act of violence? The man swallowed his saliva. Should he run?

The orc lifted something up. It was nothing other than a radish. An orc holding a radish, it was an unusual sight. Was he an orc who would throw everything around him if he got upset? Would the radish fly over right now?

His eyes looked down. As the man tried to bow his head, something unbelievable happened.

The orc placed the radish near his face and gently smiled.

“.....!”

Then the orc spoke in a loud voice, “Radish.”

“.....!”

“Do you need one?”

Did he need a radish? The man didn't understand. However, he felt a type of strange trust from that short question. A pride that didn't need long, flowery words! The warmth that spread from a gentle smile.

The man nodded like he was spellbound.

“I need...”

There was nothing more to say. The man paid the money and the orc handed over the radish. One radish was sold. Stella couldn't understand why the man bought the radish and what this whole thing meant for her.

After the man bought the radish from the orc, people started to show interest. Another man walked up to the orc and said, “This is the first time that I am seeing an orc vegetable dealer. Orc, how much is this onion?”

“.....”

Ian looked at the man with blank eyes. It was a deep look.

“...What will you do with the onion?”

The man rolled his eyes at the sudden question.

“Huh? That...I don’t know. My wife will take care of it.”

He was a patriarchal man who knew nothing about cooking. Ian shook his head.

“I won’t sell you the onion.”

A declaration of refusal! The eyes of everyone watching grew bigger. What merchant would refuse to sell an item? Had the orc applied a quota to the onions? He was a mysterious orc vegetable seller.

“Each ingredient has a value. An onion is the ultimate vegetable that can be used for all dishes. It can be used in stir-fry, steamed soup, soup, fried dishes, or as a nutritional or taste supplement. It is the guardian of the home.”

“T-Then why...?”

“I will only sell it to those who understand the value of this ingredient.”

The pride of the seller who would judge the buyer’s qualifications! It was a first for the market. The orc vegetable seller folded his arms and didn’t say anything more.

The rejected man looked between the orc and the onion with devastated eyes.

“T-Then...”

A woman came forward.

“Hrmm, he doesn’t know the value of the onion at that age because he depends on his wife instead of cooking for himself. It’s shameful!”

She was a middle-aged woman wearing a headband. She lifted a potato and said, “Orc, I want to buy a basket of potatoes.”

“Hoh...”

“What do you think I will make with this?”

“A basket of potatoes...”

The orc vegetable seller touched his chin with a troubled expression, “Hrmm...potatoes... Thinking about the health of the family...how about a boiled potato salad...?”

The middle-aged woman waved her fingers and said with a smile.

“Wrong.”

“Then what...?”

“The dish I will create...”

She said firmly. Everyone was surprised by her answer.

“Fried potatoes.”

“Fried...? Frying...?”

“Crispy potatoes fried in oil.”

“Fried... Oil... Isn’t this the enemy of health that causes hypertension, myocardial infarction, or obesity...?”

Didn’t their parents and elders always tell them to boil instead of frying?

“Yes, Mister is correct. That is possible, but they are just words.”

The middle-aged woman laughed at the orc vegetable seller’s puzzled expression.

“Isn’t it good to risk your health if you can know the taste of fried potatoes?”

“.....!”

“I would rather live today freely than tomorrow in caution. That is the value of the potatoes to me.”

“That...!”

It was big. This woman...big. Her thoughts were bigger than his. She was someone who walked the path of a gourmet without any prejudice or self-righteousness.

The orc vegetable seller stood up in amazement.

“...Rather, I have learned something from you.”

“The world is wide, Mister Orc.”

“To you...I will sell three baskets instead of just one.”

“I’ll willingly accept.”

Thus, the middle-aged woman left with three baskets of potatoes. The people who witnessed the encounter came up to the orc seller and started conveying their beliefs.

“I will make a soup with the carrots. The color will hide the

identity for my children who don't like carrots. It is my small consideration for the dark knight at the table."

"Give me an onion. I'll serve it with a great steak. The people of the world only look at the heroes, but the protagonists are the performers who do their part in silence."

"Please give me garlic. I'll eat it raw. It's my gut feeling that I have to try the original taste of the ingredient and confront the world."

Truly a great success! The vegetables started to quickly sell. The orc vegetable seller looked around at the empty store.

Sold out! It was a clean sweep.

He declared it to the customers, "Today, I left the land of the orcs for the first time and had a thought as I saw the various species in Anail. Do they really know the honor of the ingredients? Do they take vegetables seriously? Are they pursuing the path of cooking with their own beliefs?"

"....."

"I was skeptical, as I figured it wouldn't be the case. But now I have realized it. I was wrong. I'll acknowledge my misjudgment. There are a lot more gourmets than I first thought there were in this world."

Everyone nodded. The orc bowed.

“This orc! Today I have learned from the humans, dwarves, elves and gnomes!”

“Um!”

“Ohh!”

Clap. Clap. Clap.

An enthusiastic applause began. Everybody who watched him cheered and clapped. This day became a legend at the Anail Branch of the Blacksmith Company and would be circulated throughout the city for years.

The legendary witness, Stella, who had been watching this scene from the beginning, made a rotten expression.

“...What on earth?”

Chapter 12 – User Hunters (1)

Stella questioned Ian, “What the hell was that? How did you do that?”

“Let’s see... I just became an orc vegetable seller.”

“This is nonsense...”

It was like a scene from a short-story. If she took a video and posted it on the Internet, it would be a wonderful video that would instantly become a phenomenon. Ian pondered before speaking, “I didn’t think about becoming an orc with my head.”

“Then?”

“I asked myself: What if I weren’t the human Jung Ian, but actually an orc vegetable seller? What would I do in this situation if I were an honest orc vegetable seller?”

He wasn’t from Earth, but a living orc in the world of Elder Lord.

“Then I just acted accordingly.”

“Like a role player...?”

“Role player...”

Ian laughed.

“I just became my character.”

Stella started thinking.

These things were common sense to the rankers of Elder Lord, who had the ambition to climb up. They played Elder Lord sincerely! The system followed the user's assimilation rate. Everything changed according to how immersed they were, and their subsequent actions. Even if the people speaking had the same confidence and gestures, the world of Elder Lord responded differently depending on their mindset and assimilation rate.

The man called Ian had a strange feeling about him; this person really enjoyed Elder Lord.

Stella nodded. “I see, I just realized something. By the way, is your real name Jung Ian? Are you Korean?”

“Yes.”

“I thought you were a foreigner after hearing the name, ‘Ian’.”

“Haha.”

In Elder Lord, one could meet users from all over the world.

Thanks to the sophisticated state-of-the-art interpretation system, all of the users spoke a universal language in Elder Lord, regardless of their nationality. Ian forgot this fact since the communication was so natural. In fact, both Grom and Stella could be foreigners.

Stella smiled at Ian and said, “I’m a Korean.”

“Aha, I see.”

“Register me as a friend, I’ll contact you often in the future.”

Ian only had Grom registered as a friend at the moment. Ian accepted Stella’s friend request and now they could send and receive messages to each other.

Stella asked, “How long have you been playing Elder Lord?”

“Around two weeks in reality...?”

“Really?”

Stella’s eyes widened as she nodded.

“I see. In the future, Ian will become big in Elder Lord.”

“Me? It’s nothing. This is just a hobby.”

He was just doing this because of his little sister. But now it seemed like he was enjoying Elder Lord more and more.

“Well, that’s is good. Isn’t your assimilation rate pretty high?”

“Assimilation rate?”

“In the status window.”

“Wait a minute.”

It had been a while since he looked at his status window. Ian checked his status window.

[Status Window]

‘Friend of Farmers’ Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 4

Achievement Points: 80

Assimilation: 56%

Abilities:

Orc's Strength (Common)

Orc's Recovery (Common)

Orc's Greatsword Technique (Uncommon)

Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)

His assimilation rate was slightly higher than before. It started at 50% and was now at 56%.

“I have 56%.”

“Omo, really?”

“Is that high?”

“It's pretty high. It's a great assimilation rate, especially since you just started. Mine is between 30~40%.”

“Aha...”

“Rather, the higher the assimilation is, the more painful and realistic the game becomes. Therefore, there are a lot of people

who deliberately lower the limit.”

That’s why it was painful when he fought. Ian nodded.

He hadn’t cared so far, but there was a details option in his status window. With this, he could put a limit on the assimilation rate or modify his title. He could also determine the approximate proficiency level of his skills. Orc’s Strength and Orc’s Recovery were close to reaching the Uncommon grade.

The rate of assimilation was left with no limit and his title was ‘Friend of Farmers’.

After talking more with Stella, he discovered that her level was much higher than his. In Elder Lord, the level didn’t necessarily mean strength because it depended on achievement points and skills. This allowed players of various occupations to enjoy Elder Lord, rather than just fighting.

Stella mentioned her trump skill, ‘Negotiating Eloquence’, which was at the Special grade.

“Please tell me if you have anything you want to buy next time. This skill is very strong when it comes to bargaining prices.”

“You couldn’t sell a few vegetables.”

“That...uh...I can’t say anything but... Ian is strange.”

She checked the time. “Oh, I made a promise to someone, so I need to disconnect. Today was nice. Thanks for everything, you really surprised me today. See you again.”

“Yes. Then let’s meet another time.”

“Ah right, please receive this.”

She handed a bandana to Ian. It seemed to be a worker’s bandana with the mark of the Blacksmith Company in the corner.

“Use this.”

“...?”

“It isn’t good to be a user in Anail, especially as an orc.”

“The mark can only be seen by users.”

“That’s the problem.”

Stella shrugged. “Users are scarier than NPCs.”

“...?”

“Oh, I am late. I really am going now. Then bye!”

She went into the store and disconnected in order to avoid attention. Today, he met a new friend in Elder Lord. This was why people played Elder Lord. Ian smiled happily. Then he suddenly realized.

“Wait. The quest reward...?”

He had forgotten about the reward as he was talking to her. Was this the influence of her Negotiation Eloquence skill? Next time they met, he would have to ask for it.

He wore the bandana. He quite liked it, he looked like a trendy orc with a fashion sense.

Ian headed towards Thompson's house, where Hoyt was currently at, with a spring in his step. However, there were shadows peeking at Ian.

“That orc...he's a user right?”

“That's right, there's a star on the forehead.”

“Huhu, isn't he one crazy bastard?”

“That crazy bastard is perfect for us.”

“It is great. Shall we hunt an orc today...?”

Whispering in the alley, a white star like Ian’s shone on their foreheads.

It was dark. The night sky of Elder Lord was also beautiful. The stars from reality shone brightly in his virtual world. The galaxy, a group of stars that became a heavenly river in the sky.

Ian hummed as he looked up into the night sky. If the stars were like little children with shining eyes, the moon that shone calmly upon the world was their mother. The clean air cleared the atmosphere around him.

Ian wasn’t surprised when three humans appeared from an alley, as he had heard them approaching. However, he hadn’t lowered his head due to the beautiful stars.

“Hello Orc.”

The weapons in their hands were dully shining in the moonlight. The first thing that popped into Ian’s mind was a name.

“Derek?”

They looked at each other and shrugged.

“I have no idea who that is, but just die quietly.”

They didn't seem to be Derek's followers. Ian looked around, they were in a place with no people. This was the best place to attack someone.

“Orcs are a great source of achievement points.”

“He is easy to catch because he is a user, and it also raises proficiency.”

“Kikikik.”

The three of them surrounded Ian, who stepped back and calmly analyzed them. It was an unexpected incident, but Ian's head quickly entered combat mode. It was as natural as breathing for him.

He quickly figured out the enemy's information.

The tall, slim man wielding a spear was the ranged type to keep Ian in check. The other man, who was in the back holding a staff, was a support magician in the rear. The light-bodied woman who held two short swords was a close combat fighter that would disturb his field of view with dizzying movements.

“What are you looking at?”

Ian didn't respond to their words. He focused on predicting the flow of the battle and figuring out how to take the initiative. This moment would decide the outcome of the battle.

The man with the spear would stop Ian while the woman would distract him. While Ian dealt with the other two assailants, the magician in the rear would bombard him with spells. It was a familiar attack formation based on raid tactics. He needed to disrupt their rhythm.

Ian's first priority was to catch the defenseless magician. Ian purposely acted frightened.

"Excuse me...what will you do...?"

The woman burst out laughing.

"Look, he's so cute when he is frightened."

"You used to act like this when you were attacked by knights..."

As they laughed among themselves, Ian immediately struck. They weren't in an attack posture and hurriedly raised their weapon towards Ian.

"Eh eh...?"

There was a short gap in their combat power in the short moment that they weren't ready for battle. Ian rushed like crazy and thrust his greatsword at the spear and swords. They stepped back to take an attack stance.

However, Ian ignored them and kept rushing. The magician was temporarily left unprotected and exposed to the orc warrior, his eyes clouding over in dismay.

Ian laughed. Ian's sword slashed his neck before the magician could even lift his staff. His head flew through the air.

“Kyaaak!”

The woman screamed at the sight of blood. Ian kicked the body of the magician who had lost his head. He had died before even using magic once.

[Congratulations! You have made the man who attacked you pay the price in blood.]

[50 achievement points have been acquired.]

[Your level has risen.]

[An explosive power was momentarily displayed. The skill, Orc's Strength (Common), has evolved.]

[Orc's Strength (Common) has been upgraded to Orc's Superhuman Strength (Uncommon).]

“No, that, he was clearly a user...”

“What user? This...”

The man and woman stepped back. This wasn't what they expected.

Users were weak. Apart from their combat power, their mental strength was also weak. They were modern people. They couldn't become immersed in realistic battle, where blood and guts oozed out. Therefore, most of them were passive in combat, making it possible for user hunters like these people to exist.

However, Ian was different. He was a man who lived in a reality that was as cruel as Elder Lord. A dead body wasn't able to stop him. No, it only made him more brutal.

Ian smiled as he recalled Hoyt's teachings. That's right. The fear of the enemy was his own strength.

As the bloody orc smiled, the two people backed away in horror.

“Hey, hey, we, we were wrong. That isn't a user. It doesn't seem

like it.”

“I saw it!”

“Ah, I don’t know. He’s wearing a bandana. I was mistaken, what kind of user is that?”

They fell into confusion. Ian was still a beginner. He had felt it when he hit both of their weapons when they weren’t ready. Ian wouldn’t have an advantage in the fight against them.

However, they were already gripped by fear. Ian approached as they fell back while raising their weapons.

“Ah, I don’t know. Fight! Kill him first!”

“Uwah!”

The man thrust his spear. Ian moved his body and avoided it. He tried to dig into the gap, but the woman came up to Ian with her short swords. Two wounds occurred on both sides of Ian’s body.

“We can deal with him.”

“We’ve killed a lot of users. We can do it!”

Formidable. Their movements were practiced. How many users

had they killed to move in sync like this? Ian's face distorted.

Ian remembered one of his skills. Orc's Recovery. It was an orc passive skill that healed the injuries after a considerable amount of time.

Okay. He didn't want to see the enemy's face filled with confidence anymore. He would erase it.

Ian avoided the spear while focusing on the woman's movements. He revealed a gap around his abdomen, as if it was a mistake. The woman responded immediately. She came in deep and aimed her swords with a shout. At that moment, Ian struck back with the greatsword instead of defending his body.

Puok.

Jeeeok.

Their attacks crossed. Ian had a dagger stuck in his belly, while the woman's torso was split in half.

Chapter 13 – User Hunters (2)

A cross-section of the woman's body was revealed as her parts fell to either side. The man screamed at the gory sight.

“Eri! Eri...!”

Anybody who fought in Elder Lord would have a brutal battle. There was a reason why Elder Lord was an adult game.

However, Ian wasn't concerned, despite being the person involved. He just admired the realistic representation of the human body. He looked at the sword that was stuck in his abdomen. He would leave it alone and get rid of the other guy first. Ian lifted his bloody greatsword, its shadow covering the face of the spear user.

The man lost his strength and flopped down. Then he whispered.

“As much as possible...no pain...”

Ian nodded and swung his sword straight downwards. His first PK experience in Elder Lord had ended with his victory.

[You have gotten rid of all the assailants.]

[200 achievement points have been acquired.]

[Your level has risen.]

[Orc's Recovery (Common) has been used.]

[You have recovered from countless wounds suffered in many battles.]

[Orc's Recovery (Common) has been promoted to Orc's Vitality (Uncommon)].

[There is a short sword stuck in your abdomen. It will be dangerous if left untreated.]

[Status Window]

‘Friend of Farmers’ Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 6

Achievement Points: 330

Assimilation: 57%

Abilities:

Orc's Superhuman Strength (Uncommon)

Orc's Vitality (Uncommon)

Orc's Greatsword Technique (Uncommon)

Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)

Two of his skills had been upgraded after taking care of the users. It made sense why these guys hunted users. The bodies of the dead users turned into white particles, drifting like dandelion seeds in the wind, until they couldn't be seen anymore.

The three bodies of the men and woman disappeared, leaving only their equipment behind.

“...Are these mine now?”

This was another reason to hunt other users.

Ian pulled out the sword stuck in his abdomen. He swallowed back the pain and bandaged the wounds with the clothes of the user hunters. He scanned the equipment and found nothing special. They were the ordinary clothes and weapons sold at the

blacksmiths. All of them had the Common rating.

He grabbed the spear, the swords, and the staff, since they could be sold. Ian and raised his head and saw an empty, vacant lot. There was no one here.

The battle was over. Ian felt something unfamiliar swelling up inside him. He had defeated criminals in Elder Lord.

Ian murmured to himself, “Today, I met three wicked people and killed them, implementing justice.”

An orc who knew honor!

“Where are the people who know honor?”

The orc who fought against injustice!

Great. It was like a scene from a movie. However, he felt strangely ashamed. Ian’s face turned red, moving quickly in case someone had heard him. Soon after Ian’s figure disappeared. Only the clothing of the assailants remained in the back alley of Anail.

“...Amazing.”

Then a woman walked out from the shadows. She was a woman wearing all black, with a mask covering her face. The tight clothes revealed her alluring body.

“I came to cover the user hunters, only to hit a jackpot.”

She looked at the place where the assailants were.

Jackson. Brown. Eri. They were user hunters active in the Anail area, and were known to attack anyone, regardless of whether they were beginners or not. They used a friendly approach to get close to the user, only to stab them in the back and gain their items and achievement points. They aimed solely at users that weren't familiar with combat. Therefore, there were complaints about the trio of killers.

However, they hit an orc NPC by accident and suffered.

The battle scene was amazing. A boldness that the users couldn't follow! A cruelty that wasn't afraid of blood! The decisiveness of his attacks! A soliloquy after the battle ended!

She came up with a title for her video.

“The mannerless user hunters, justice is implemented!”

Their bad behavior had already been uploaded. The scenes of them ambushing a user, only to be killed, would be an explosive hit. She didn't know why, but it seemed like they had mistaken the NPC for a user.

She nodded as she checked the video that she recorded. People would go crazy over it. The sight of wicked people forgetting themselves and falling into the pit of hell. There was even a nice soliloquy of justice!

She glanced around as she ended the connection.

Park Jungtae smiled as he heard Yiyu's voice next to him.

"Hey, Park Jungtae. What level are you?"

"I don't have a capsule."

"Then go to a capsule room."

"Stop playing the game and focus on your life. Didn't you do badly on the exam?"

"Wow, how cowardly to attack with that fact."

The two were sitting in a cafe on campus. After their economics lecture ended, they decided to spend some time together. As the two of them were talking, someone called out Yiyu's name.

"Ah, Yiyu! Jung Yiyu!"

“Park Jungtae as well?”

A group of girls rushed over and sat at their table.

“What are the two of you doing?”

“Isn’t this strange? Perhaps? Jungtae, wow~ Park Jungtae, not bad~.”

Yiyu laughed, “If you are just here to talk nonsense, then leave.”

“Isn’t that too harsh? Do you want me to keep calling you Rabbit? Didn’t a rabbit give you a hard time?”

“Ah, noisy.”

After Yiyu died from a rabbit in Elder Lord, her friends kept on calling her Rabbit.

“By the way, have you seen it?” Her friend asked.

“What?”

“Youvidser Laney’s video.”

Youvidser. Youvids was the world's largest video upload site, and its content creators were called Youvidsers. Of course, even in Youvids, most of the mainstream content was related to Elder Lord.

Laney was a star who emerged after reporting on various types of wicked players, filming their wickedness in gruesome detail. Rumor has it that the users captured on video weren't even aware of Laney's existence because she was such a high level assassin.

"Seen what?" Yiyu asked.

"Look look, it is a bit hit. The three user hunters humiliation video."

She pulled out her tablet. Yiyu, Park Jungtae and her friends focused on the tablet.

[Laney's 'Justice is implemented on the user hunters.']

The opening scene was of three users chuckling with one orc standing in front of them. Laney edited the caption.

[The mannerless user hunters, they've found an orc user!]

“Orc? An orc user?”

“Keep watching.”

[As usual, they are trying to ambush the user....]

They laughed as the orc hesitated. But after a short moment, the orc rushed and instantly cut off the magician’s head.

“Whoa.”

“Isn’t that crazy?”

The dismay on the user hunters’ faces was caught on the screen.

[But ding! That is incorrect! An NPC!]

It became a 2 vs 1 fight. The user hunters were familiar with fighting, so they attacked the orc pretty well. The orc went on the defensive.

“Isn’t the orc losing?”

“It is coming soon.”

At that time, the woman stabbed the orc with a short sword. The orc was waiting for that moment and cut the female hunter's torso. The user hunter's body was split in half.

Yiyu flinched as she watched the brutal scene.

“I can see the flesh and bones.”

Park Jungtae admired the sight. The woman's body was broken and the lone spearman soon fell down. He whispered something to the orc and the orc nodded. Then he beheaded the user.

3 vs 1! Their power didn't differ much. Rather, the user hunters were superior in power. However, the skill and the boldness of the orc overwhelmed them. It was truly a fierce battle!

“This is why you shouldn't touch NPCs.”

The corpses of the users turned white and disappeared. The orc grabbed their weapons and stood still. The video didn't end there.

“...There's more?”

“Listen carefully.”

The orc stood there, looking into the air. Then the orc opened his mouth.

-Today, I met three wicked people and killed them, implementing justice.

The orc formed a fist.

-Where are the people who know honor?

It was a loud voice. The orc disappeared into the darkness of the city after speaking.

Park Jungtae and Yiyu's mouths dropped open.

“...Amazing.”

“...Really cool.”

An unknown spirit was blazing from him! There was an explosion of comments.

↳ Elder Lord's Path: I'm going to become an orc.

↳ Arigato: 222222.

↳ I am the Best: 222222.

└ Cooking Fondant: 22222.

└Woo In-sung's Secret: 2222ππ

└ (View more)

└ My name is Yoda: We are going crazy;;; Protect honor;;

└ Assassination King: I have to reevaluate hunting orc users.

└ Dragon Bra: It's just a staged scene ≡ ○

└ Ninano: He really seems like a NPC ;;; An orc who clears houses.

└ Orc Hunter: An orc is a mob.

└ Number 1 Orc User Maguchwi: Dirty humans!! Death!! Shout Bul'tar!!!!

└ Camper: The real one has appeared!!!!

└ Oscar Hazard: (Explanation) Maguchwi quit being an orc shaman ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ Truly an orc user.

└ I am the Upright Beta: I am still an orc. ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ

└ Jungle King Wenger: Weren't you whining that you should reset? ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ

└ (View more)

└ Normal Person: I am someone who hasn't been an orc...

└ Americano: The orc's tears ㄣ ㄣ

└ Slow Angel: ㄣ ㄣ Tears of an orc user...

└ Number 2 Orc User Kuwakta: Shout!!!!!! Bul'tar!!!!!!

└ Oscar hazard: ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ A festival for orc users

└ Delicious Omurice: Orc users are going crazy ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ

└ Psychedelia: ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ Keep quiet orc users

└ Orc Never Die: ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ What is Bul'tar?

└ (View more)

(View more)

The general users and orc users who believed in orcs were all enthusiastic. Yiyu's eyes shone as she saw the comments under the videos, then she asked, "Should I go be an orc?"

"Are you crazy?"

"Is that so?"

"Don't be an orc."

Park Jungtae also thought about trying out an orc in Elder Lord, but he soon gave up. The character that he had been playing for a while was human. He was a blacksmith but he was busy with his part time job and school. It was tough to enjoy the game.

Soon, it was time for his next lecture. Park Jungtae got up.

"I have to go."

"Uh. Bye. See you tomorrow."

"Jungtae, bai!"

"Bye!"

Park Jungtae separated from the group and walked through the

university.

“Hey, Park Jungtae!

“Eh?”

A foreign car stopped on the side of the campus. The car door opened and someone run towards him. Park Jungtae's face distorted. It was the senior he got into a fight with over Yiyu.

The senior cried out, “You, fuck, what did you do? Eh? What's going on?”

“What?”

“I'll apologize, yes? Cancel everything, I'll pay for all your medical expenses.”

“W-What?”

“My father's company will be ruined!”

“Why are you telling me...”

“Using common sense, you're the only one! Why did the customers suddenly cancel their accounts! They have all abandoned our company! After we fought...”

His face was like he lost his soul. The senior didn't pay any attention to the gazes around him as he clung onto Jungtae.

Somebody popped into Park Jungtae's head at the words. It was Yiyu's brother and the owner of Café Reason, Jung Ian.

The senior cried out, "I am acting like this, eh? I didn't know you were so strong. Really..."

"No, Senior. I really don't know. Would I have a part time job if I could do that? I'm trying to make a living."

"Ah..."

"I don't understand, but I hope it will be resolved. Now I have to go to a lecture."

"Hey, agreement! Let's come to an agreement! Eh? I can write a memorandum. Write it now!"

"Now?"

"Yes, now."

Park Jungtae nodded.

‘Jungtae, I’ll resolve it so don’t worry.’

As Ian said, Jungtae didn’t know what happened, but everything was resolved.

Chapter 14 – About Life (1)

Ian spent several days at Thompson's home. Derek's men kept threatening them, so Hoyt and Ian took turns protecting the house.

Meanwhile, Ian was trained by Hoyt.

In Elder Lord, skills were divided into various ratings. Common grade meant one was around the ordinary level, while Uncommon was better even better than that. After Uncommon was Special, and then after that was the Rare rank. Following Rare, the current highest known rank, was Essence. It meant literally realizing the essence of the skill.

Among the famous rankers of Elder Lord, Choi Hansung's skill, 'Battlefield Penetrating Eyes', was revealed to be at the Essence grade.

Most of the user's skills were Common, Uncommon, or the occasional Special grade skills. Elder Lord resembled reality. Everyone's abilities were different, and it wasn't easy for a user to reach a level beyond Special. Therefore, most of them were enthusiastic about gathering as many skills as possible.

“Do you believe in your abilities?”

“I believe in them to a certain extent.”

Ian replied.

He learned martial arts. In other words, he was unusually strong. Of course, he trained hard, but it wasn't like his colleagues didn't work hard either. Ian knew that he had a talent for violence. Talented people would feel like they were talented.

Hoyt nodded.

“Certainly, you have talent. However, keep in mind that talent isn't the only thing needed to become strong.”

“Are you talking about effort?”

“I think that the word effort is too light.”

He laughed.

“Obsession.”

“.....”

“We can be anything.”

He didn't want to, but he acknowledged it. It wasn't strange to call it a type of power.

Ian had lived in poverty, and his parents' business hadn't been good in his childhood. After his parents died, he inherited their debt and headed to the battlefield to make money. It was a harsh life that he could never boast about to anyone else.

He killed and killed again. It was all for the sake of money. The targets weren't always evil.

Therefore, if he acknowledged Hoyt, he would have to blame himself for choosing life on the battlefield without trying any other ways. Indeed, such guilt tormented his heart.

Ian continued, "Not everyone can do that."

"Everyone..."

Hoyt smiled and aimed his hammer at Ian.

"I am not talking to everyone right now."

"Then..."

"I am talking to you right now."

Ian looked at him. Hoyt's body, full of battle scars and tattoos, was proof of his experience over the past years.

“Are you a common person?”

“I...”

“Do you want to be a warrior?”

“I want to be one.”

“Everyone... If you are like everyone else, then you can't be a warrior. A warrior has to go on a path that no one else has traveled before.”

Hoyt moved back and raised the hammer with both of his hands.

“Look closely.”

Hoyt took a deep breath. Ian flinched. The atmosphere seemed to be shaking, and he could feel something coming from Hoyt's body.

Strength, it wasn't the same as energy. Rather, it was the opposite. As a result, Hoyt's presence became blurred. He was becoming a part of this world. Then again, he became separate from the world.

Hoyt moved his hammer. It was a slow motion. However, Ian witnessed the world moving in reverse. The world broke with the simple movements of the hammer.

Ian wanted to sit down, as he couldn't believe his eyes. This, this was the pinnacle state that Baek Hanho said Ian was unlikely to reach in his lifetime. This was the domain of the ancient military arts.

It was short, but seemed to last for an eternity. Hoyt raised his hammer and restored his breathing. He looked at Ian and smiled.

“Did you see?”

“Ah...”

“I was hoping so, but you really are amazing to see it.”

“This...”

Hoyt put down his hammer. Sweat rolled down his face.

“When I was your age, there was a really talented orc. I was stupid compared to him. Something that he took one try to learn would take me 20 or 30 attempts.”

“Hoyt....?”

“That's right. He really was a genius. He would make an instant judgment and rush at the opponent with marvelous skill. He had a brilliant wit that I could never reach in my lifetime. So, I desperately asked the instructor. What could I do to become

stronger?”

Hoyt raised the hand at his waist. Ian handed him a towel.

“The instructor showed me a number of ways to wield the weapon. And that was enough. I didn’t need to know anything else, he said.”

It was the early stages of the pinnacle.

“I believed him and repeated his actions like crazy. People laughed at me like it was ridiculous, but I didn’t give up. I worked constantly without compromise. 10,000 times, 100,000 times, and more. Then at some point, I became a warrior.”

Ian looked at his sword. He could do the same.

“You definitely have talent,” Hoyt said.

“Yes.”

“That is why I am saying this.”

“Yes...”

“Go towards the pinnacle, and beyond me.”

Ian’s martial arts were stagnant. It had undergone further development on the battlefield, but was blocked again by a wall. He couldn’t go beyond that. Ian inwardly acknowledged his limits. But today, he saw beyond it. It was inside a game.

[Congratulations! You have witnessed a Pinnacle grade skill.]

[You feel thrilled by the high level of martial arts and the reality of the Pinnacle grade skill!]

[A Pinnacle grade skill is only achieved by the real powerhouses in the world of Elder Lord.]

[The title ‘Person Pursuing the Pinnacle’ has been acquired. All skills will gain proficiency until they reach the Pinnacle grade.]

[You have acquired the Mind’s Eye (Special) skill that allows you to understand the reality of the target.]

[50 achievement points have been acquired.]

[Your level has risen.]

[Status Window]

‘Person Pursuing the Pinnacle’ Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 7

Achievement Points: 380

Assimilation: 57%

Abilities:

Orc’s Superhuman Strength (Uncommon)

Orc’s Vitality (Uncommon)

Orc’s Greatsword Technique (Uncommon)

Warrior’s Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)

Mind’s Eye (Special)

The messages popped up, but Ian shook his head. Those things didn’t matter right now.

His heart pounded. He wanted to swing his sword. He wanted to move his body. Not just in the game, but in reality as well. Ian still couldn't believe that he saw it.

“It's hard since it's the first time I've done it in quite a while.”

“It is really wonderful.”

“You are even more amazing. You don't seem like an apprentice, since even some of the best warriors would only see a common swing.”

Hoyt looked at the sun. He had the ability to calculate the approximate time according to the location of the sun, a skill that Ian didn't have.

“It's time for Ray to finish.”

Ian said, “I'll go.”

“Please.”

Ian started moving.

Ray, the oldest of Thompson's children, was attending school. It wasn't a regular training curriculum provided by the government like in Ian's reality, but a private institute run by various intellectual scholars. Thompson believed that his children should

be in school, regardless of his economic situation. It was an educational facility that the guards of Anail protected, so Derek couldn't reach it with his hands.

Ian headed towards the school. It had been a few days, so the people of Anail were used to seeing orcs. Some people of different species greeted Ian.

“Uh, aren't you selling vegetables now?”

“It was a part-time job.”

“Too bad.”

“Stella is still selling fresh vegetables.”

“I can't trust that girl.”

“Kulkulkul.”

The reputation system! Reputation existed in Elder Lord. Ian became known in Anail through positive activities, such as selling vegetables and protecting the Thompson family from the vicious loan shark. The attitudes of the NPCs changed from what they were before. They didn't discriminate against orcs any longer..

Ian entered Ray's school with light footsteps. However, the atmosphere was weird. The children were forming a circle around

something. This was the scene of a typical kid's fight. There was a familiar face inside.

Ray.

Ian watched closely without interrupting. Ray and another child were tangled together as they rolled across the ground. Fists were aimed at the other person. Ian touched the shoulder of a child watching on the outside.

“Who...heok?”

The child's face turned pale as he was faced with the rugged face of an orc. Ian asked quietly, “Why are they fighting?”

“That...Robin teased Ray and said that his dad had run away.”

“Hmm...”

Ray was pretty tough. Even though it was an even fight, Ray soon overpowered Robin. He got on top of Robin and swung his fist. Robin covered his face with his arms. Ray's fist hit the guard.

At this moment, Ian interrupted.

“Stop, stop.”

The children separated like the how the Sea split for Moses after hearing the orc's words. Ray also stopped moving.

"You shouldn't fight."

Ian pulled them apart. Ray released Robin and started panting, while Robin stepped back with a nosebleed.

"If you say it one more time, then I'll kill you," Ray declared, his eyes filled with hate. That Robin bastard hadn't died.

"That's right, your dad isn't here right now."

"This bastard!"

Ian stopped Ray, who shook his head as he was grabbed by Ian.

"Mister! That asshole, look at what he is saying! I'll kill him!"

Ian was stumped. When he was a child, he beat someone up for cursing at his family. Ian couldn't say to not use violence because he understood Ray. In addition, this was Elder Lord, where fists were close to being the law, unlike in the real world. It wasn't an ideal story. In the end, humans had to learn how to survive on their own in this world.

Ian just shook his head.

“It is done, so let’s stop here. You don’t want to fight anymore, do you?”

Ray was still enthusiastic, but Robin didn’t want to fight any longer. He wiped his bloody nose with his sleeve. Ian dispersed the children.

He took Ray and started heading back home. Ian had raised Yiyu, but she didn’t experience this situation because she was a girl. She would just quarrel with her friends and then they would make up.

“Mister, I want to become stronger by learning the sword like you.”

“Why?”

“If I get stronger, then I can kill those guys.”

Ian chuckled in a low voice.

“Do you want to kill them?”

“Yes.”

“Isn’t that too much?”

“I am angry.”

“You can’t kill a person just because you don’t like them, Ray.”

“.....”

“There is always someone stronger than you. Then what if that person appears and kills a person you care about?”

“Then I will die fighting them, like a man.”

Ian looked at Ray. Ray avoided his gaze as if he knew what Ian was thinking.

“That isn’t a manly thing to do.”

“.....”

“Ray. It is easy to speak about death.”

Ian patted the head of the silent Ray. He seemed more suited to the world of Elder Lord. He received a secret killing technique from Baek Hanho and survived on the battlefield. These things had no place in the real world. He might run a cafe that made coffee, but he knew more about fighting and killing, life and death, than anyone else.

Ian scratched his head. His mind was complicated. At that time, some people appeared and surrounded Ian and Ray.

“Hello Orc, we meet again.”

This face. It was one of Derek’s underlings who broke into Thompson’s house.

“That monster isn’t here this time, so won’t it be different?”

All of them were holding weapons. Their purpose was obvious, even to a blind man.

Ian placed Ray behind him and grabbed his sword handle. He measured their power. If they were his opponents, then he would be able to get away with Ray somehow.

But there was a man watching from the rear. A middle-aged man with a beard looked at Ian with a bored face. He wore expensive clothing and held a sword. A bright aura shone around the sharp blade.

“Are you a friend of Hoyt...?”

A low and hoarse voice emerged from the man. He stepped forward. A strong force was emitted from his whole body. Ian was nervous.

Strong. Clearly stronger than Ian.

“I am Derek, Young Man.”

Ian gathered his strength as he listened. He had to hang in there. Looking at Derek’s nonchalant face, Ian felt like an egg before an approaching knife. His entire body was ready. Derek approached.

“The interest...I will have you pay for it with your body.”

Chapter 15 – About Life (2)

The residents fled after seeing Derek. Everyone knew Derek, the notorious loan shark who dominated Anail's back alleys.

Ian looked around. There didn't seem to be any escape path for him to take. Derek's men formed a circle around Ian to prevent him from fleeing.

What should he do? Ian's eyes sunk.

Derek and his five people. Not only that, but Derek was much stronger than the rest of his people. It was best not to fight.

"Derek, it's best that you don't fight me."

"Why do you think that?"

"Do you have the confidence to stop Hoyt's anger?"

He mentioned Hoyt. Derek's failure to harm the Thompson family was entirely due to Hoyt. However, unlike his expectations, Derek smiled quietly.

Ian became uncomfortable. Derek's smile and laid back behaviour was the exact opposite of what he imagined. Ian expected him to be a sleazy money lender, but Derek was much bigger than that. His strength was like a warrior, exuding a sharp

atmosphere that Ian had never felt before.

Ian realized that the situation was going out of control. Now he had to gamble.

Derek raised his sword.

“You won’t be going alone, so don’t worry.”

He laughed and imitated Ian’s words.

“Young Man, it would be best if you didn’t fight back.”

Ian could feel Ray’s hands trembling at his waist. Ian tried to get help from Stella, whom he met in Anail, but she wasn’t connected.

It was a dilemma. Ian also raised his greatsword. The important thing was Ray. For his survival, Ian had to retreat.

Ian whispered to Ray, “Hold on tightly to my neck.”

“Huh...?”

Ian lifted Ray up and placed him on his back. Ray reflexively grabbed his neck as Ian rushed backwards. It was in the opposite direction of Derek. The subordinates gathered in the direction of Ian’s escape. He needed to defeat the one in front of him before

they all gathered.

However, the underling was different from the user hunters that Ian had overpowered. He calmly swung his sword and slowed Ian down. As Ian stopped, the other underlings caught up. Ian was once again surrounded and the siege was narrowed further.

Beyond them, Derek was approaching. “Even if you struggle, the result is the same.”

“.....”

Ian decided to buy some time.

“No matter how dirty a loan shark is, you shouldn’t act unfairly.”

“Unfairly...?”

“Yes, Derek. Let’s have a fair 1 on 1 fight,” Ian said.

Derek burst out laughing.

“Puhahaha. What are you saying, Orc?”

“Derek is a thoroughly practical person. Do you think that I would speak nonsense?”

“Have a 1 on 1 with your friends in heaven. Kilkil.”

Derek’s mouth rose.

“...Hrmm.”

Ian ignored the underlings and told Derek.

“Surely you aren’t scared of a 1 on 1 fight?”

“What an interesting friend.”

Ian didn’t expect him to agree to the blatant provocation, but Derek abruptly nodded.

“Okay.”

His subordinates’ eyes widened.

“Boss...?”

“Why, do you have no confidence?”

“Me?”

“Yes.”

Derek placed a knife at the neck of an underling and said, “Surely Derek’s men aren’t afraid of an orc...?”

“Ah, no!”

“So fight him. Alone.”

“Yes, yep!”

Derek’s subordinate vigorously nodded his head and pulled out his sword as he stepped forward. Ian put Ray down while ignoring the ominous feeling in the back of his mind.

“Ray, stay back. If there is a gap, then run away.”

“Mister...”

“Don’t worry. Don’t you believe in an orc warrior?”

Ian laughed. Ray’s face became tearful. It was a familiar scene.

‘Ray, don’t you believe in Father?’

His father Thompson had left after saying the same remark as Ian. He still hadn’t come back. Ray wanted to hold onto Ian, but he was already moving forward and pointing at Derek’s subordinate

with his sword.

“Mister...”

The battle began. Ian came out first. He tried to draw the opponent to his side, but the person stepped back because he felt the incredible atmosphere of Orc’s Superhuman Strength.

This was fortunate for Ian. Ian just wanted to buy some time. Eventually, Hoyt would hear about this and come running. Ian moved forward with no substance in his attacks. The opponent kept avoiding. Derek’s expression hardened as he saw both of them.

“How boring,” Derek muttered.

Then the expression on the face of the underling changed.

“Uhh...Uaaaah!”

The opponent rushed at Ian, who stepped back to avoid the incoming attacks. The attacker and defender had changed, but the battle was a repetition of the previous one.

Derek burst out laughing.

“Young orc.”

“.....”

“I know your intentions, but you should also pay attention to me.”

Derek gestured with his chin. Derek’s subordinates once again raised their weapons.

“If you don’t properly entertain me, then this will be over.”

Ian took a deep breath. His choices had disappeared. There was only one road remaining now. He had no other choice but to commit to a last hurrah on this path.

Ian’s muscles swelled up.

“Bul’tar————!”

Ian charged towards the opponent. His greatsword descended with force towards the opponent’s weapon who twisted his body to avoid it. Ian pursued him and slashed him.

“Kuok!”

His opponent blocked it. The two blades faced each other and it became a battle of strength. Ian put pressure on the opponent. The other person kicked Ian in the abdomen.

“Huuk!”

“Die, orc bastard!”

The underling stabbed at his neck. Ian quickly ducked and rolled across the ground to avoid it. The sword missed. Again, the sword descended towards the body of Ian, who had fallen. Ian could barely escape by rolling to left and right.

He gritted his teeth.

“Horyaaaaah!”

Ian stood up and charged again. His opponent aimed the blade, but Ian didn't care. He pushed ahead and slashed the opponent with his sword, despite the blade aiming at him. The opponent fell to the floor.

Ian got on top of him, but there was still the blade between them. Ian paused for a short moment. He wielded his fist before he lost his spirit.

“Waaaah!”

The orc's fist struck the underling's face.

Peeok! Peeok! Peeok!

Ian's punches turned the subordinate's face into a rice cake. Ian's hand stopped as he recovered his spirit.

There was a blade at Ian's neck. It was another of Derek's subordinates.

“Stop. You can't kill any of my men.”

Ian stood up with a wince.

“Is he alive?”

“Yes, he is still breathing.”

“Foolish guy.”

Derek placed his foot on the head of the collapsed underling.

“Losing to an inexperienced orc...”

Ian stepped back and picked up his sword. There were still four subordinates remaining. Ian asked with a grin.

“Who's next?”

He breathed out. His body was a wreck.

[Orc's Vitality (Uncommon) is being used.]

[The bleeding is severe. Please seek medical attention.]

[Your right arm won't move. Your actions are constrained.]

The third subordinate was lying down with a pierced abdomen. Now there were only two left, excluding Derek.

Ian's head drooped against his will. He wanted to collapse. He wanted to rest. It would be comfortable if he died. After all, this was just a game. However, he had to protect Ray.

It may have been a game to him, but this was reality for Ray, an NPC with an artificial intelligence. Right now, the life of an NPC was depending on him.

Ian laughed. Lenox's voice rang in his ears.

'Raise your head! Everything is hard! Don't relax! It is hard! So what? Nobody cares!'

Those words. The enemy wouldn't care about his circumstances.

The enemy didn't care that he wanted to close his eyes and collapse. No, they would gain strength from Ian's despair, and would try to step on him.

"Who's next?" Ian shouted.

The residents were already watching the fight through the windows and gaps in the alleys. An orc struggling against the infamous Derek. The orc shed blood, but didn't give up.

"Come! I will deal with you!"

"Impressive."

Derek nodded.

"Yes, you... you truly are Hoyt's friend. I believe it."

"Derek, will you come out?"

"The entertainment is over, Young Man."

"What do you mean?"

"I enjoyed it, but now it is time to work."

Derek gestured with his chin. Then his subordinate, hovering

behind Ian, grabbed Ray. Ray struggled desperately, but he couldn't resist the strength of an adult. Ian tried to rush over, but Derek approached and punched Ian in the abdomen.

“Cough...!”

Derek was strong. It was a blow that made his head go blank.

Ian sat down. Derek spoke in a laughing tone from above him.

“The time is coming soon.”

Derek grabbed Ian's hair. Then someone caught Ian's attention.

An orc was running over. One eye, and a scary face laced with scars and covered in tattoos. It was Hoyt.

Chapter 16 – About Life (3)

“Hoyt, the honorable warrior Hoyt.”

Derek laughed. “I’m glad that you came.”

“Let go of them.”

“Let’s see...”

Ray was brought to Derek’s side. He circled around Ian and Ray as he asked, “Hoyt, what is your relationship with this young orc?”

“He is a colleague helping me out.”

“Is he also an orc warrior?”

“An apprentice, but I guarantee that one day he will become a warrior.”

Derek nodded. “Orc warriors are extraordinary... I haven’t met many orc warriors, but they all have one thing in common.”

Derek kicked Ian.

“Ugh!”

“They all have a logic that I can’t understand.”

He unleashed a barrage of attacks on Ian, who was collapsed on the ground. The shock caused by the feet hitting Ian’s wounds caused more blood to pour out. Ian’s body was so weak that he couldn’t get up anymore.

“You are protecting the Thompson family.” Derek touched Ian’s head with his toes. “This orc also risked his life fighting for that trivial reason.”

“Kuuack...”

“I will be honest.”

Derek held a knife to Ray’s neck, who was captured by his men. “The money that Thompson borrowed, it is nothing to me.”

“Derek!”

“But I had a lot of fun after you guys barged in. An honorable warrior, that is interesting.”

“If you hurt the both of them, then I will keep my honor and make you pay the price,” growled Hoyt.

“Calm down, I haven’t done anything yet. I don’t want to do anything.”

Derek's subordinate grabbed Ray's hair and pulled his head back. The boy's white neck was clearly revealed under the midday sun.

"You are the one who will have to do something, Hoyt."

"What does that mean?!"

"I always wonder the same thing when seeing people like you. What if that belief was bent? Where will you go?"

The blade passed lightly over Ray's neck, leaving a thin red line in its path. Blood flowed downwards.

"Kneel down, Hoyt."

"Derek...!"

"If you don't fall to your knees, then this child will die."

Ray trembled. Ian tried to stand up, but a subordinate nearby stepped on his back. Ian moaned and collapsed back onto the ground.

"Come, kneel down Hoyt. Bow your honor."

Derek said with a chuckle.

Ian formed a tight fist where he was laying on the ground, his head brimming with fury. Hoyt wasn't an orc who could be insulted by a loan shark. A man who made slaves of others or sold them to brothels for money couldn't sneer at Hoyt.

He was a warrior who knew honor, and had proven himself. Derek absolutely couldn't mock Hoyt.

[The Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon) has been used.]

[You are an orc who doesn't know how to give up.]

[Your fighting spirit has raised the limits of your body.]

Ian shook his head. Hoyt was about to bend his knees. His eyes were calm, but Ian's eyes shook fiercely as he looked at Hoyt. A hot emotion was boiling up in his body.

[Your willpower has soared.]

[Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon) is extremely fierce.]

[Warrior's Fighting Spirit has temporarily changed to Indomitable Will (Special).]

[Indomitable Will (Special) has temporarily changed to Indomitable Fighting Spirit (Rare).]

[Your body has gone beyond its limits.]

His status window flashed. Derek’s voice was heard.

“Kneel and place your forehead against the ground.”

He was smiling.

“There should be a banging sound. Then I’ll safely return them.”

Ian’s hand moved. He grabbed Derek’s ankle.

[Your assimilation rate has risen. It is now 57%.]

[Assimilation: 58%]

[Assimilation: 59%]

.....

Assimilation: 65%]

[Assimilation: 66%]

.....

[Your assimilation rate has risen. It is now...]

Ian pulled at Derek's ankle. Derek stumbled at the sudden power. Ian stood up using all his might. The subordinate with his leg on Ian's back fell down. All the strength in Ian's body exploded as he aimed his left fist at Derek.

Derek avoided it and aimed his knife at Ian. Ian leaned back. His body was light. He avoided Derek's knife. Every wound on Ian's body was screaming. The pain cleared Ian's spirit of any distractions. He desperately burned his power as he aimed at Derek's torso.

"This last-ditch struggle...!"

Derek growled out as he stabbed Ian with his knife. The knife was stuck in Ian's side. His knees tried to buckle, but he gave strength to his legs and persisted. He gritted his teeth and moved.

His goal wasn't Derek. Ian aimed at the face of the man holding Ray. Ian's fists flew at his face. A strike with all the power in his body! The opponent's body flew through the air.

Ian caught Ray's body. He could feel a weapon aiming towards his back. Ian didn't care and threw Ray towards Hoyt.

“Run————!”

Ray flew through the air and rolled across the floor. He got up and ran towards Hoyt. Ray burrowed himself into Hoyt's arms.

Ian laughed at the sight. It was up to here. He had done what was needed.

Then Derek kicked him onto the ground. Ian was trampled on many times by Derek and his men.. Derek's attack contained a lot of anger, so it felt like Ian's breath stopped every time. Ian's vomited up blood. Derek didn't care and kicked Ian's head.

Ian rolled across the ground. Derek stopped the beating and breathed out.

“Hoo, hoo...”

Ian grinned with his messed up face and asked, “How is it... Derek...?”

“I looked down on you. I apologize for that, but nothing has changed.” Derek smiled like he was suppressing his anger and turned towards Hoyt. “It is because my proposal is still valid.”

“.....”

“Hoyt, kneel. Otherwise, I will kill this orc cruelly. I am very angry right now so my patience has fallen. Do it right now.”

Derek raised his knife. “I said to bow down.”

Ian burst out laughing.

“Kulkulkul, kulkul, kuku, kulkulkul...! Kulkul, ku, kulkul!”

“What is so funny?”

Ian cried out, “Hoyt... Now...you don’t have to listen to this coward.”

“Do you want to die?”

“Derek, I won’t die even if I die.”

“What does that mean?”

“Literally.”

Ian spat out blood and said.

“I received the curse of the stars.”

“.....!”

“Even if I die, I will revive. I absolutely won’t let Derek insult Hoyt. Kulkulkul.”

Derek glanced at Hoyt. “Is that true, Hoyt?”

“.....”

“The curse of the stars... So you’re not afraid of death.”

Derek nodded.

“I will know once I kill you.”

He raised his knife. Ian smiled and closed his eyes. This was his first death in Elder Lord, but he wouldn’t feel afraid if he could preserve the honor of a respectable warrior. Rather, he would gladly die.

Just as Derek’s blade was about to fall, Hoyt’s voice was heard.

“Derek, stop.”

Ian opened his eyes.

“What is it?”

“I will accept.”

“Hoh.”

Ian turned his head and screamed.

“Hoyt, what...?”

Hoyt didn't look at Ian. His eyes were firm like there was nothing more to be said.

“Hoyt...!”

Ian's face distorted. Despite his desperate look, Hoyt's knees started to slowly fold.

Hoyt raised a fist. Then he saw Ian's messed up face and put his fist down. He slapped Ian's face instead.

Jjak!

“Kuock...”

“I’m disappointed in you.”

Ian couldn’t accept it. “I did what I wanted.”

“Suicide?”

“Hoyt, I received the curse of the stars!”

“I know.”

“I’m not afraid of death...”

The fist came flying this time. Ian collapsed on the floor.

“Kuock...”

“Keep this in mind.”

Hoyt grabbed Ian’s neck and lifted him. A tremendous power could be felt. The terrible face of the one-eyed Hoyt pushed closed to him.

“An orc who isn’t afraid of death can’t become a warrior.”

“.....”

“Remember, young orc. Death can never beat life. The one who survives is strong.”

“But...”

“Do you know why the orcs are always asking if you are alive?”

“.....”

“Honor, freedom, struggle-they are only possible if you are alive. Enduring a little humiliation is nothing in order to live.”

Ian bowed his head. Elder Lord was a game to him, but Hoyt was a resident of Elder Lord. For him, life and death here was reality. Hoyt’s hands were trembling as they grabbed Ian’s neck.

“In front of survival, falling to my knees is nothing.”

“...I’m really sorry.”

“Think about what real honor is. It is true that pride isn’t real honor.”

“I understand.”

“No matter what, we have to survive.”

Ian nodded.

Hoyt’s true heart was revealed.

The sunset caused the sky to look as if it were on fire. Ian carefully engraved Hoyt’s harsh face, that received the glow, into his head. Hoyt’s wild breathing, his careful eyes, and his voice that was discussing life made its way into Ian, making it impossible to tell if this world was a game or if it was reality.

The sky in Elder Lord was no different from the sky in reality.

Hoyt said, “Thank you.”

“.....!”

“I said this before, but I might think the same way if I were you.” Hoyt smiled quietly.

“No...” Ian laughed despite the pressure on this throat. It was like the cliched plots that he disliked. “By the way, how were my abilities? Derek was surprised.”

“Kulkulkul. Nice. You should have seen his face.”

The two orcs burst out laughing.

They talked for a while. Hoyt smiled before calming himself and asked with a solemn expression, “I wanted to tell you one final thing. Death doesn’t avoid you because you have been cursed by the stars. Rather, you must survive longer than others.”

“What do you mean?”

“You have to build up achievements in order to receive God’s forgiveness, but death will cause those achievements to drop. If you don’t receive forgiveness, then you will face a more severe pain and destruction than death. Those who are cursed by God, who keep dying without any fear of death, are eventually drawn into the Abyss and punished for eternity. That can happen to you.”

Ian listened. He could see how the NPCs perceived the curse of the stars. If the story was real, then it really was a terrible curse.

“There is a reason why the curse of the stars is called a curse.”

“I will keep that in mind.”

“I will pray for you to escape the confines of it.”

A delicious smell was coming from inside Thompson’s house.

Thompson's wife, who had been informed of the encounter with Derek, cried with tears of gratefulness and regret. Ian and Hoyt desperately tried to calm her down. She was probably cooking for them.

"I'm looking forward to the meal."

"Yes."

Ian and Hoyt turned towards the house. It was at that moment that a long shadow covered Ian and Hoyt. It was the shape of a person.

Ian and Hoyt looked back at the same time. A man stood there. The owner of the shadow opened his mouth.

"What stupid orcs are standing in front of my house?"

Hoyt's eyes widened. The man standing there was wearing old and dirty clothes. The man laughed.

"Hoyt, I'm back."

"Thompson!"

Thompson had returned.

Chapter 17 – Warrior's Qualifications (1)

Thompson walked towards Hoyt. One of his legs was limping, and one could easily guess what his journey had been like through his ragged clothing.

“Your face is still fearsome.”

“You are still skinny like a dried anchovy.”

The two people looked at each other, numerous emotions flashing across their faces. Hoyt extended his fist.

“You are alive.”

“...Yes.”

Thompson looked at Hoyt's fist for a moment. His mouth twitched as he smiled and wiped at his face with his sleeves. His face twisted up in an unknown emotion. Thompson shook his head. His shoulders trembled.

“I'm a...live.”

Thompson lifted his fist. A human fist was small compared to an orc's. The two fists touched. Tears flowed from Thompson's eyes. He tried to hold back his cries as he wrapped both hands around Hoyt's fist.

“Your family is well.”

“Thank you. Thank you, Hoyt...”

“The crybaby has returned.”

“You...you really...”

Thompson embraced Hoyt.

“I am sorry. And thank you...”

“We are friends.”

“Friends. Yes, my dear friend...”

The sunset spread above the heads of the human and orc hugging each other. Thompson cried for a while.

The door of the house opened and a little boy stuck out his head. He discovered the figure of the man. The boy rubbed his eyes with doubt before running towards the man, crying aloud. The rest of the family inside the house came out and discovered Thompson’s return. They rushed over to him in excitement.

Ian nodded as he looked on from a distance. The two orcs and the

human family had a warm dinner together.

Derek leaned back in his chair.

He had built a great fortune in the free city of Anail and reigned like a king in the underworld. Even the mayor of Anail couldn't face him head-on.

The man who entered Derek's room was trembling because he knew this fact.

“100 gold...”

“I will definitely pay you back.”

“What about the collateral?”

“If I sell my house...”

Derek picked up his dagger. The man jumped.

Derek lowered the dagger and pierced a cockroach crawling on his desk. Copious amounts of blood and body fluids emerged from the twitching body until it fell silent. Derek pulled out his dagger, the fragmented body of the cockroach sliding off of it.

“The value of your house is a little lacking.”

“I will pay it all back, even if I have to dedicate my life...”

“You are also not enough.”

“T-Then...?”

“Your family.”

Derek supported his chin on his folded hands.

“Once the deadline passes, the interest will double. If you can’t pay the price, then I will take away some family members.”

“That...”

“Didn’t you say that you would pay it back? Are you trying to cheat me?”

“I’m not!”

“Then the story is easy. You don’t need to worry about what will happen since you will pay it all back. Isn’t that right?”

“.....”

“I want you to solve the problem and pay me back. It is my sincere wish that our business with each other turns out well.”

Derek rang the notification bell on his desk. The door opened and a subordinate entered. He placed a pile of paperwork on the desk.

“Now, read this. It is as we promised. Sign it.”

“I’m thinking...”

“This won’t be available later, it is now or never.”

“Ohhh...”

“Sign it right now.”

The man dropped his head. He scanned the documents. The contents were simple. Derek’s money would be borrowed, the interest rate was stated, and the collateral set up. The collateral included his house, himself, and even his family.

The man hesitated and Derek stretched out his hand for the documents. The man grabbed the papers, his eyes ablaze in fury. He gritted his teeth and signed his name and handed the documents over to Derek. Derek nodded.

Derek and the man had now become the creditor and debtor.

“Then I wish you luck.”

“.....”

The man accepted a duplicate copy of the paperwork. The handwriting on both copies lit up. The man held it in his trembling hands and walked out of Derek’s room. Derek looked at his back and started thinking.

The reason why Derek was able to accumulate wealth in Anail was simple.

He created and executed a contract. That was all. He followed the agreement he signed with other people, regardless of his emotions. While others were emotionally distracted, Derek just followed the contents of the contract. He carried out the contract. If the other person broke it, then he would kill them and execute the rest of the contract.

“Senior.”

“What is going on?”

“Thompson has fulfilled his agreement.”

Derek’s eyes widened.

“Hoh.”

“He has also paid all the added interest.”

“Interesting.”

“There was an accident, but he received a lucky chance because to that.”

The subordinate watched Derek, who nodded. “Continue.”

“Yes. On the way back, he encountered monsters attacking a group of dwarves and most of his upper ranked personnel were injured helping them. Due to this, he returned late. However, it turned out that the dwarves were blacksmiths of the Golden Anvil.”

“How dramatic.”

The Golden Anvil was a tribe with the best workmanship among the dexterous dwarves. They didn't give away their things easily. They were stubborn craftsman who only conveyed goods to those they had a relationship with.

“Thanks to that, he made a deal with the Golden Anvil, and will earn large amounts of money in the future.”

“What a funny story.”

Derek laughed.

“Benevolent Thompson, stupid Thompson. He was betrayed because of that trust, and due to this kindness in helping out the dwarves, his family was almost ruined.”

If it weren't for Hoyt, his family would've been destroyed while he was busy with the dwarves.

“However, thanks to that nature, Thompson helped both his family and the dwarves. In the end, didn't Thompson's kindness improve his quality of life?”

“It might be the case now, but we don't know what will happen later.”

“That's right, I don't know. Huhuhu.”

His subordinate removed the cockroach from his desk, cleaned the knife and asked. “So, releasing Thompson...will we do that?”

Derek nodded. “The contract must be respected.”

“Yes, then I will tell him.”

“Good work.”

“It is nothing.”

His subordinate left.

Derek recalled what happened yesterday.

Derek had met a lot of people in his life, and had come to a conclusion. People were all the same. They acted like they were different, but in the end, they were just greedy and selfish beings. These were variables that Derek could gauge.

Despite all of this, Derek couldn't understand Hoyt and the warriors. Derek was interested for the first time.

He wanted to see if their beliefs would bend. Would they have the same reaction as other humans? Would they be the same as the others, or remain a warrior to the end? If so, what would they pay to keep that honor?

Yesterday, he had seen Hoyt on his knees. But Derek didn't feel what he had expected. Rather, it had become more obscure.

There was a young orc with Hoyt.

“The curse of the stars...”

There were a few cursed people on the continent. However, the number of those who were cursed by the stars kept increasing.

Not long ago, a person cursed by the stars did a great job and his name became widely known, and the nobleman who sponsored him gained tremendous profits. Since then, other nobles and large figures started to pay attention to those who had been cursed by the stars.

The young orc said he was cursed by the stars.

Derek had a good feeling. He had felt one thing from the orc.

A will that wouldn't break. An indomitable fighting spirit. Those with such spirits would eventually come to two ends:

An early death or-

“A flourishing life.”

Derek muttered.

The young orc would break early or become great.

Derek was convinced. They were people he couldn't understand. He had dug into the rice paddy, and what he found wasn't the shabby grain that he had initially expected. Rather, Derek himself might be swallowed by the Abyss.

If that was the case...

“Investment...”

Derek had never taken risks—he always made sure that there was a guarantee that benefited him. In no time, life had become boring, and he also got older. Now there was nothing unexpected in his life. The man who borrowed money earlier would run away, knowing that his house and family would end up in Derek’s hands. The recovered amount would be 15% of the principal investment.

“I don’t understand.”

For the first time in his life, he was gripped with the desire to take a risk and make a bet.

“Life is never known...”

“I’d like this.”

“Isn’t it too big?”

“An orc should swing this type of sword.”

Hoyt and Ian brainstormed together as they looked over something on a piece of paper. It was a drawing of a weapon.

In order to repay Hoyt and Ian, Thompson had offered to make them weapons.

There weren't many merchants who could deal with the Golden Anvil blacksmiths, so few warriors used their weapons. Ian and Hoyt had the opportunity to obtain Golden Anvil weapons, thanks to Thompson.

Hoyt drew a hammer that wasn't significantly different to the one he used in the past, but Ian thought of a huge greatsword that was much bigger compared to his previous one. Hoyt thought it was too big to be a sword.

“Are you really planning on this?”

“Yes, I can feel it.”

A giant bayonet. At Orcrox Fortress' Hall of Fame, the greatsword that 'Master of the Greatsword' Leyteno was holding was also this big.

“Then go with your gut. Kulkulkul.”

Hoyt sat on the sofa and sipped his tea. It was an expensive black tea brought back by Thompson.

Thompson had succeeded in recovering his business and he was busy trading again. Every day, he rented a crystal ball from the Blacksmith Company and communicated with his former clients. Derek had backed away from Thompson. He was someone who only followed the contract. Ian didn't like this reputation either.

Ian said, "He is a villain."

"You never know when you might need him."

"....."

Derek had handed Ian a business card, saying to come find him if Ian ever needed help.

'I will never approach a villain like him.'

Ian had cursed at the man who brought him the business card, but he, Derek's direct subordinate, just smiled in return.

"I'll never ask for his help."

"You don't know what will happen in the future." Hoyt just smiled.

Ian asked, "What will you do next?"

“Thompson is back and the business with Derek is resolved, so I will go traveling again.”

“Then, you’re leaving the city soon?”

The time that he spent with Hoyt had flown by. It was hard to believe that it was almost time for them to separate.

“I plan to stay at Orcrox Fortress for a bit, so don’t worry too much.”

“Ohh...”

“I have something to tell Instructor Lenox.”

Even Hoyt had learned from Lenox, so just how old was Lenox? In addition, how strong was Lenox, to be able to maintain such spirit, despite the long passage of time? Ian felt admiration towards Lenox.

Ian then once again became immersed in the drawing of his weapon.

Suddenly, he received a whisper. It was from Grom.

[Grom: Ian... Are you doing well...?]

As soon as he read the message, Grom's sullen expression appeared in his head.

[Ian: Yes, I'm fine. How about you, Grom?]

Grom replied,

[Grom: I...]

[Grom: Well...]

[Grom: Help me...]

[Grom: I'm scared... ㄗ ㄗ]

Ian heard that Grom had been hunting for goblins.

[Ian: Are the goblins that scary?]

[Grom: ...Nope... Not the goblins...]

Grom replied.

[Grom: The orc warriors... ㄗ ㄗ]

While Ian and Hoyt were watching the Thompson family, enjoying their leisure time, and envisioning their new weapons from the Golden Anvil craftsmen, Grom was pitifully rolling among the harsh orc warriors.

Chapter 18 – Warrior’s Qualifications (2)

A goblin stood in front of Grom. It had a small body, and a grumpy face that displayed an angry expression as it threw a stone at Grom.

“Ouch!”

The rock hit his shin and Grom jumped, grabbing his leg in pain. The goblin started throwing stones even harder.

“This bastard!”

Grom raised his axe and ran towards the goblin. The goblin rushed away quickly. In the meantime, he kept throwing dirt and rocks back at Grom.

“Wait there!”

The goblin hid behind some thick bushes. Grom jumped over the bushes.

“Got you...!”

As Grom landed on the ground, goblins surrounded him.

“Kyahahak! Kyak!”

“Kyah! Kyak!”

The goblins no longer held rocks. They held things like blunt axes, rusty swords, spears, and other weapons that seemed to have been stolen.

The goblin who lured Grom into the crowd shot a nasty smile at him and threw a rock again. Grom was hit in the head and fell over. Detestable. Really detestable. He wanted to rush over and give it a good thrashing, but he was outnumbered. It was a group of goblins with over a dozen people.

Grom fell back.

Thud, thud.

Someone touched Grom's back. He turned around to see a goblin holding a handaxe. He laughed. His rear was also dominated by goblins.

Grom laughed awkwardly, “...Kulkul.”

Grom was now able to laugh like an orc. However, he looked a bit subservient.

The goblin raised his axe and started a slicing motion towards Grom's neck. His head would be cut off now if he didn't run away.

As the goblin smiled mockingly, Grom felt a sense of déjà vu.

Something boiled up inside him. He was angry. It was really detestable. Yes, this emotion, it was like when someone told him off for being too loud in an Internet cafe. It felt like that time, when he hit the reset button and ran away.

Grom's axe flashed.

“Keeeeeek!”

The goblin's head was split apart.

“These kids————!”

The goblins were astonished and simultaneously rushed towards Grom. Grom wielded his axe. There were goblins everywhere. He spun the axe around and around in order to survive. The goblins didn't dare approach the wildly spinning axe and retreated.

It was his last hurrah, but it worked!

Grom shouted as old memories flashed through his head.

“Whirlwind————!”

Then messages popped up.

[Congratulations!]

[You struggled to survive and have learned an hidden axe technique!]

[You are like a terrible trolley car that spins round and round, destroying everything around you in its wake, no matter what!]

[This is an attack that enemies can't deal with!]

[All enemies will be unconditionally killed!]

[A terrible massacre, a feast of blood is anticipated!]

[The wild attack that will decimate everything!]

Oh my god! Grom's expression brightened.

It was clear. A hidden piece. This was a hidden piece of Elder Lord, a hidden skill!

[Overwhelming Assault (Common) has been acquired!]

Grom wobbled.

The name was cool, but it was just an ordinary Common grade skill. As soon as he lost balance, the goblins charged towards Grom.

“Keook!”

He rolled and avoided their attacks, but his skull was soon smashed by a goblin’s stone hammer. His head started spinning. He could see goblins raising their weapons out of the corner of his eye.

This would be his first death since becoming an orc. Grom closed his eyes.

At that moment, the earth started to shake.

The goblins flinched. A thunderous sound hit their ears.

“Bul————!”

“Tarrrrrrrrr————!”

Grom opened his eyes. 10 orc warriors came rushing like crazy. Their broad shoulders made it seem like they numbered in the dozens, or in the hundreds. They were like a runaway train as they

swept through the goblins. The goblins' bodies flew through the air.

“Kyaaaaak!”

“Kyak!”

“Kieeeeek!”

The goblins started screaming and crying. With one assault, dozens of goblins were torn into rags.

“Keooooook!”

Grom shrieked.

The orc warriors didn't care as Grom fell down.

[You are in critical condition!]

“.....”

Grom slumped down.

The fight was over in a flash. The goblins were twitching on the

ground. The orc warriors killed those goblins without mercy.

“Apprentice! Where are you? Are you alive?”

“Euh....”

Grom got up. The faces of the warriors were visible. All of them looked fearsome. Their faces and bodies were full of tattoos, and they were covered with blood. They had relaxed gestures and an imposing walk!

The real warriors recognized by Lenox! The warriors who found Grom laughed out loud, “Kulkulkulkul! You’re alive, Apprentice! Wonderful!”

“You lured the goblins very well! Great talent!”

“Pushovers who see other pushovers would want to catch them!”

“The goblins truly have discerning eyes! They judged perfectly! They are perfect at judging pushovers! Kuhahahah!”

That’s right. Grom had been acting as the pushover, or bait, all day.

The goblins were very wary of orcs, but once they saw Grom, they would provoke him and pull him into a large crowd. Then the orc warriors would rush in to slaughter the group.

As the bait, Grom had suffered and almost died many times. The goblins were too much, and he could barely resist for a minute every time. Then, once Grom was surrounded, the orc warriors would charge in and sweep up the goblins.

This had happened several times already. The goblins would wither away due to the orc warriors from Orcrox Fortress.

The warriors urged Grom to hurry.

“Then, I’ll ask you to prepare new goblins again, Apprentice!”

Grom shook his head.

“Warriors, I think it will be hard now.”

“What do you mean?”

“Goblins are also intelligent monsters! At this point, they might’ve noticed your strategy.”

“Hrmm.”

“Besides, I have grown in the battles. I am different from before, I have become stronger. The goblins won’t be able to easily mess with me. They have eyes!”

That's right. Grom had fought with the warriors. Although he almost died several times, he was able to accumulate skill proficiency and achievement points. Furthermore, he had gained the Overwhelming Assault (Common) skill. The goblins wouldn't be able to defeat Grom, who was more powerful.

"That makes sense."

"Yes! That's right."

"But we don't know if we don't try one more time."

"I understand. However, it is a waste of time."

Grom walked through the forest with the warriors behind him. He was different from before. He puffed out his chest and showed the attitude of a warrior. Now, Grom was a warrior who stood among the orcs! He was still an apprentice, but the goblins couldn't come near him...

"Keek! Keek!"

A goblin appeared before his thought finished!

"Keek! Keeek!"

Grom felt resigned. The two goblins circled around Grom. They

exchanged glances. Grom was able to guess their meaning.

Pushover! A pushover!

Resignation became anger. Grom cried out as anger rose in his body. His temper blazed fiercely towards the goblins.

“These guys————!”

It was the skill Overwhelming Assault!

“Kyakak, kyaack?”

“Kek? Keehek?”

Why did a pushover suddenly become like this? Let’s see? Was it money?

The goblins stepped back with surprise. Dozens of suddenly goblins emerged from the rocks! But Grom, who had become crazy, charged towards them without stopping his assault. He was like a runaway train!

“Buuuuuuuul———— taaaaaaaar————!”

–Then this corner!

–A video is the topic! Video of a video! A distilled version is given!

–It is like red ginseng extract!

–Oh, Jaehan-ssi. Don't you think red ginseng is too much?

–Hahaha. I'm sorry. I don't know because I have been taking red ginseng medicine lately.

–Distilled? Ohoho, who told you that it was good for you?

–[It is a secret. Ahahahaha.](#)

(TL Note: red ginseng can be taken as an aphrodisiac and used to help with male erectile dysfunction)

“They are playing around.”

Yiyu shook her head.

“The atmosphere around the two of them is what wins viewers.”

“What are they going to discuss?”

Yiyu was at Café Reason with her friend, Yoon Bora. They were

meeting for a group assignment. But as always, various accidents and illnesses occurred, meaning that only the two of them attended. The two of them quickly quit the task.

They watched as the two hosts of [Elder Road Times], Yoojung and Jaehan, introduced the topic.

-The fourth video is a comedy in Elder Lord and will make your stomach hurt just watching it! It is a behind the scenes video of the militia leader, Kim Dalkwang.

-Isn't another name for Kim Dalkwang 'Capitalist Monster', a monster born from capitalism?

-Yes! He boasts exceptional role-playing skills. Of course, he isn't just funny but also has great abilities. Now, then please watch!

The door of Café Reason opened. It was Ian. He entered and discovered that Yiyu was here.

“You came?”

“Yes, Oppa.”

“Oppa, hello!”

Ian smiled at Yoon Bora's greeting.

“Hello. Bora-ssi right?”

“Yes, you remembered. It’s been a while.”

“That’s right. You must be busy. You should come here more often.”

“Yes!”

Yiyu elbowed Yoon Bora.

“Why, what is it?”

“Look at this.”

Ian also eyed the tablet. He was now an Elder Lord player. It was necessary to know the hot topics.

–Hahahaha. That is really funny.

–Yes. Kukuk. My belly button has fallen off. Jaehan-ssi, please find my belly button. It is gone.

–Hahaha. Belly button?

–Yes, belly button. Find it!

I'll find it after the recording. Please believe in me.

-Oh, impressive!

“Hu...”

Ian shook his head.

-I'm sorry. Hahaha! This time, Youvidser Laney filmed a video that is very hot!

-Orc users, wake up! The force of an orc warrior! Let's feel it altogether!

Ian focused on the orc. What orc had done a wonderful job of spreading the taste of orcs to the ignorant humans?

“.....”

However, the scene was familiar. An orc quickly slaughtered three users. The face that looked into the air as he held his weapon was familiar. That was obviously...

-Today, I met three wicked people and killed them, implementing justice.

“Cough...”

-Where are the people who know honor?

“C-Cough! Cough!”

“Oppa, what is it?”

“No, that, cough! Cough!”

“Did you swallow something the wrong way?”

He had choked with dismay. Yiyu gave some water to Ian. Ian sipped the water while calming his surprise. Ian was confused by the complicated emotions he felt as he listened to Yiyu and Yoon Bora talk about how cool and manly the orc was.

‘Who filmed that?’

At that moment, the notification bell rang as the door to Café Reason opened.

A woman entered.

She was a considerable beauty. She walked in gracefully with expensive clothes that seemed to shine. Her hair was wavy, as if it was copper wire, and each sweep of her head was a seductive

gesture that made the people who saw it tremble.

Had a real celebrity appeared for a photo shoot? People who looked like bodyguards waited outside the door. No, they were bodyguards.

“Pretty...” Yiyu admired.

The woman headed to the counter.

“Yes, what would you like to order?” The part time worker, Han Yeori, asked.

“The boss, is he here?”

“Eh? The boss?”

“Yes, Jung Ian-ssi.”

“That...Boss, over there...”

Han Yeori pointed to Ian. The woman turned slowly. She smiled as she found Ian. That face was familiar.

On the other side, Ian recalled the name of the woman who cried out to him.

“Ji Hayeon-ssi?”

The beautiful woman, Ji Hayeon, grinned. It was a bright smile, like a flower blooming in the spring. She walked over and held out a hand to Ian.

“It’s been a while.”

“I didn’t know you would come find me like this.”

“I thought I should go see my saviour.”

Ian and Ji Hayeon shook hands.

“Raven, no, is it Jung Ian-ssi?”

Ian smiled at the old name that reminded him of the past. “Just call me Ian-ssi.”

“Yes, I will. No. I actually know a little bit about Ian-ssi. Ah, don’t worry. I found out after that incident.”

That incident. Ian smiled wryly. “Yes.”

She said, “Jung Ian-ssi is a little older than me.”

Ian cocked his head. “Indeed.”

“So it makes sense.” Ji Hayeon smiled brightly again. “Is it okay if I call you Oppa?”

On Yiyu’s side, there was a frozen silence.

In this short meeting, Ian smiled again for a third time.

Chapter 19 – Warrior’s Qualifications (3)

Lenox looked at the two orcs in front of him.

“Now you look better.”

Ian laughed. He met Hoyt, learned what being an orc warrior meant, and grew as he fought against Derek. Grom also straightened his shoulders. He had defeated the goblins along with 10 orc warriors. He experienced what a true warrior’s battle was. He wasn’t the old Grom any longer.

Lenox asked, “Are you satisfied?”

Ian and Grom both shook their heads.

“I’m not satisfied!”

“I’m not satisfied!”

Lenox nodded.

“Yes. Don’t be satisfied.”

It had been a while, but Lenox hadn’t changed. When Ian returned to Orcrox Fortress, the first thing he saw was Lenox grabbing the neck of an orc and lifting him.

“You are tired! You fell! You are now dead! If you were in the battlefield, then your neck would be pierced right now! Your urine would be soaking the ground!”

“I would kill myself before being shamed like that!”

The orc really freaked out as Lenox raised his axe. Looking at that sight, Ian had felt like he had returned home for some reason.

“There’s something you need to know before becoming a warrior.

Lenox touched his chin. He seemed to be troubled. It was the first time they had seen him hesitate.

“It might be a little bit...”

Ian and Grom gulped.

What would make Instructor Lenox hesitate? Lenox eventually nodded.

“I’m going to believe in you.”

Belief. It was Lenox, not anyone else, who said that he believed in them. His chest became hot, a serious expression appearing on Ian’s face.

Lenox turned around. Ian and Grom followed him. They entered the Hall of Fame.

The sound of their footsteps echoed off the stone walls. They passed by the statues of the great warriors. The torch lit up a dark tunnel. At the end of the tunnel was a large stone room.

A single monument stood there. It was large enough that they had to look up to see the head. An ancient orc was carved on the monument. Ian couldn't understand what it meant. Lenox stared at it for a while. The torch scattered dark shadows over his face.

“Honor.”

Lenox whispered. His voice rang through the stone chamber.

“The laws of a warrior.”

“Proof.”

It was an unknown story. Lenox read the ancient orc words carved into the monument. His gaze moved from the beginning to the end of the monument.

Lenox turned around. His face was more solemn than they had ever seen it.

Then he said, “I don’t like long explanations.”

“Yes.”

“Listen carefully.”

Lenox closed his eyes opened his mouth. Lenox’s voice was softer than ever, but it sounded more vivid than Ian had ever heard it. It imprinted on him like a dream in an unforgettable manner.

“...God, please acknowledge me.”

Ian never heard orcs talking about the gods. Now Lenox was whispering to God for the first time.

“...Let us always hope that our honor won’t be lonely.”

“...Let our weapons never decay.”

“Listen to our oath, for we have established seven laws for you and the warrior descendants.”

“God.”

“.....”

“I.”

Lenox's voice stopped. He opened his eyes. An intense light shone towards Ian and Grom. It felt like they couldn't breathe, and that their bodies were paralyzed. Then Lenox's voice rang not in their ears, but in their heads and in their spirits.

"I."

"I am an orc, a warrior."

"A warrior doesn't forsake faith."

"A warrior doesn't persecute the weak."

"A warrior doesn't attack unarmed people."

"A warrior doesn't yield to injustice."

"A warrior doesn't shame the gods."

"A warrior pays back any favors or vengeance."

"A warrior protects the powerless."

"I swear to the gods, I will abide by these laws as a warrior."

Lenox lifted his axe. He looked up at it like it was a sacred object of trust and concluded his oath.

“Prove your honor.”

His voice stopped. Ian and Grom looked at Lenox blankly.

Lenox smiled. He wielded his axe. The blow was invisible, like a gust of air.

“.....!”

Ian and Grom’s chests were torn apart. They couldn’t even recognize the attack, let alone react to it.

Blood flowed down. The skin he cut burned like it was on fire. The wound would become a scar. It would never go away.

Lenox laughed quietly.

“It means to remember this clearly.”

Ian and Grom sat facing each other in a pub.

They each had their own income from their respective missions.

Ian received the quest reward from Stella, as well as from Thompson. In the case of Grom, he picked up the goblins' equipment and sold them to the blacksmith.

The orc's beer, which was as strong as poison, entered their mouths.

“It's good to drink this.”

“Kuoh...”

Grom just drank quietly. He wasn't usually like this.

“What happened?”

“Nothing, just...”

Grom chewed on the jerky.

“I'm absent-minded because of what happened. Orcs are more than what I thought them to be...what the hell... They seem to have depth.”

Ian nodded.

The laws of a warrior It was tough to imagine as he thought about the rough orcs. Rather, it resembled the chivalry of medieval

knights. Even Lenox's attitude was solemn as he recited the pledge. Ian could still hear that voice in his ears.

Ian smiled and said, "Don't you think that orcs are great?"

Grom shrugged.

"Well, I experienced things I never would've done if I had picked a different species. It's hard."

"That doesn't sound positive."

"In fact, I didn't start as an orc because I really wanted to be one..."

Grom hesitated. Ian nodded.

"It's possible. But if you work hard, then you will succeed someday. I might've been quiet if it weren't for you, Grom."

"Hahaha. I don't think so."

"Don't be sad and let's try it out..."

"Sad..."

Grom repeated his words.

Then he drank a lot of alcohol. Ian also drank from his cup. The two of them gulped down copious amounts of beer.

“Kuoh...!”

“Okay!”

Another orc sat down at their circular table, placing himself between Grom and Ian. Grom knew this face.

“Warrior?”

“You’re alive! My name is Gulda. Apprentice! Kuhahal!”

He bumped shoulders with Grom. It was one of the 10 warriors who defeated with goblins with Grom, the warrior Gulda.

Gulda looked at Ian.

“Are you also an apprentice?”

“Yes.”

“Kulkulkul! I see. I can’t help thinking of my own apprenticeship when I see you.”

“Did Gulda learn from Lenox?”

“Of course!”

“Were you scared then?”

“Of course! Anyone would be scared of Lenox! Kuhahal!”

They laughed at the same time.

“But keep this in mind apprentices! Instructor Lenox is a scary mentor, but he is also a great warrior! You should be honored to receive his teachings!”

He stood up and shouted as he raised his beer glass.

“For the great warrior, Lenox! Bul’tar————!”

All the orcs drinking in the pub shouted after him.

“Bul’tarr————!”

“Bul’tar————!”

The orcs downed their cups in one shot.

An orc at the beer tap noticed the atmosphere and drank once again. Ian and Grom were swept away by the ambience and drank their beers a few times. The orcs started to sing. Even though the lyrics were odd, Ian and Grom clumsily sang along.

“We are orcs! The mighty orcs! You’ll be in trouble if you mess with us! The great warriors have appeared, make way! Humans, get lost! Elves, get lost! Dwarves, get lost! Gnomes, get lost! Pretty women? Warriors have no need for a woman. Get lost! We are great orcs, great warriors!”

The oddest song lyrics! The female orcs changed the gender as they sang along.

Gulda, who was drunk on the atmosphere, stretched out and placed an arm around both Ian and Grom.

“Kuhahahal! Now what was the mission that you received?”

In an instant, the pub became loud, forcing Ian to raise his voice.

“This is the mission that Instructor Lenox gave!”

Lenox had given them another mission after teaching them the laws of a warrior. That mission was the hardest one that they had received from Lenox.

“Work as a warrior!”

After telling them the warrior's oath, Lenox had given them the task of returning after working as a warrior. It was up to each person to decide what to do. Ian and Grom didn't know what to do.

“Ohhh...!”

Gulda had a complex expression on his face. Then he hit both of them on the back.

“Keuk!”

“Ouch!”

“Congratulations to you! Orc apprentices! Very fast! Kuhahahal!”

Gulda laughed loudly.

“What are you talking about?”

“This is the last gateway to becoming a warrior!”

Ian met Grom's eyes.

“Really?!”

“Yes! You received this mission very quickly! It seems like Instructor Lenox appreciates you a lot!”

They couldn't believe it. It was unbelievable to Ian and Grom that Lenox appreciated them, since he never praised them and always yelled at them. But Gulda seemed sure of it.

“Apprentices, here's to becoming warriors! Kuhahahal!”

He celebrated with another shot of beer. Grom asked him, “Then, what is the work of a warrior?”

“I don't know!”

“You don't know?!”

“Apprentice! All warriors have their own honor! You'll need to find your own answers!”

It was like preparing for a job interview, only to find out that it was a personality interview after arriving. It wasn't a simple quest where they followed instructions.

Grom asked him.

“What work did Gulda do to become a warrior?”

“Me?”

Gulda’s eyes became distant.

“I did a tremendous task to become a warrior!”

“Ohh! What is it?”

“I used my halberd against Lenox!”

“.....!”

Ian and Grom’s mouths dropped open.

“Warriors need to be strong! I challenged Lenox to prove my strength!”

“What happened?”

“I can’t remember after swinging my halberd! Kuhahahal!”

“.....”

“I was unconscious for a week! Since then, I can’t count numbers and sometimes my hands tremble, but it’s okay! Because I am a warrior!”

Ian and Grom felt more lost. The two exchanged glances.

They would forget about the mission and just enjoy the rest of the day. Yes. Ian, Grom, and Gulda. The trio swallowed their beer at the same time.

“Bul’tar!”

Chapter 20 – Humans And Shaman (1)

Ian followed Hoyt’s advice and ventured alone out of Orcrox Fortress.

Orc warriors weren’t the only types of orcs present in Orcrox Fortress, so Hoyt advised Ian to look outside to find the answer. Heeding his advice, Ian decided to explore the wider world of Elder Lord, and find out what it was like to be a warrior.

Ian headed west, since he had never been there before.

The land of the farmers was to the south of Orcrox Fortress, while the free city of Anail was to the east. The west held Basque Village, where the shamans trained. Ian decided to visit Basque Village because he wanted to see the wise shaman Tashaquil.

Ian moved without any difficulty, killing the occasional monster. Now none of the monsters around Orcrox Fortress were his opponents.

[Status Window]

‘Person Pursuing the Pinnacle’ Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 10

Achievement Points: 610

Assimilation: 63%

Abilities:

Orc's Superhuman Strength (Uncommon)

Orc's Vitality (Uncommon)

Orc's Greatsword Technique (Uncommon)

Indomitable Will (Special)

Mind's Eye (Special)

In the meantime, both his level and achievement points increased. After fighting Derek, Warrior's Fighting Spirit was upgraded to the special ranked skill, Indomitable Will. The proficiency of Orc's Greatsword Technique also increased.

[Mind's Eye has opened. Identifying the goblin.]

[Target is weak. The poor goblin is afraid of you.]

Mind's Eye showed information about the target. With it, he could grasp the target's emotions and strength, making the ability very useful. The goblin was overwhelmed by the atmosphere around Ian and abandoned his weapon. He then fell facedown in the dirt.

“Kyaak...! Kyak...!”

It was a gesture asking for forgiveness. Ian hesitated as he lifted his greatsword. He heard Lenox's solemn voice.

‘A warrior doesn't attack unarmed people.’

He probably meant a situation like this. The goblin was begging Ian for mercy. If he struck the neck of the goblin, it would be a one-sided murder, not a battle. Ian didn't think that was the path of a warrior.

As Ian hesitated, the goblin kept bowing.

“Kyaak...!”

The goblin tried to provoke extreme compassion in the other person. Its gestures and eyes were pitiful. In the end, Ian lowered his greatsword.

“Um...!”

“Kyak kyak!”

“Rise.”

The goblin bowed deeper.

“Raise your head! Don’t bow down on your knees.”

“Kiek?”

“If you attack an orc again, then I won’t forgive you.”

“Kiek! Kiek!”

“Be an honorable goblin. Bul’tar!”

Ian turned around. It was a dignified rear view.

The goblin’s eyes became wet. He was a goblin, a nasty monster who attacked the other person! He was a species that was always cursed and insulted. But the orc had told him to be an honorable goblin. The goblin felt an unknown emotion.

Then the goblin rushed after Ian.

“Huh?”

“Kyak kyak!”

The goblin pulled Ian’s sleeve. Ian cocked his head. It seemed like the goblin was trying to say something. The goblin pointed to him with his fingertips, then pointed to another place and made a walking motion. It was a gesture to follow him.

[The goblin feels favorable towards you.]

Mind’s Eye’s gave him a positive answer. Ian nodded and followed the goblin. He didn’t know what was going on, but he thought it would be interesting.

He had previously heard from Grom that goblins were really nasty monsters. They attacked or mocked their opponent, provoking them and eventually leading them towards a large group armed with weapons. However, this goblin didn’t seem like that.

Ian walked along with the goblin. A little further ahead, a small group of approximately 10 goblins appeared. The goblins were sitting down and chewing on something. However, they became startled when they saw Ian.

“Kyaak?” Kyak! Kyak!”

“Keeek?”

The small goblins jumped up and grabbed their weapons. Ian raised the palm of his hands to show he wasn't an enemy, but they didn't calm down.

“Kiek!”

The goblin who led Ian to the goblins yelled at them. They seemed to talk about something, and then the weapons were put down. Ian walked into the group of goblins, who looked at him with a mixture of fear and curiosity.

Among the crowd was a bearded goblin.

“Orc. Kyak! It is nice to meet you kyak!”

Ian's eyes widened. The goblin used the official language.

“I am the elder of this group, Kyawak.”

“My name is Ian.”

“Ian kyak.”

Kyawak stroked the head of the goblin that led Ian here. It

seemed like the whole story had been described. Kyawak beckoned.

The goblins brought something to Ian. It was a huge chunk of beef.

“Thank you for showing mercy to my grandson kyak. This is a sign of our appreciation kyak. The goblins will treat you to a meal kyak!”

Ian nodded. He wouldn't reject their hearts. In fact, the meat was well cooked so he started to salivate.

“Thank you.”

Ian sat down. The moment that he was about to take a bite from the beef,

“.....”

The goblins around Ian were staring at the beef with longing eyes. Ian stopped moving. The goblins were holding tree roots and grass, like they were poor. Ian was the only one holding well cooked beef. Even Kyawak was just holding a big leaf. They looked like poor people starving due to a lack of food!

Ian put down the beef that he was about to bite into. Then he drew his greatsword. The goblins were startled by the sudden movement of the blade.

Ian's greatsword cut apart the beef, splitting it into exactly 11 pieces. It was the perfect distribution for Ian and the goblins. Ian gave it to the goblins without saying a word. The goblins accepted the beef with moist eyes. Kyawak seemed especially impressed as he shouted exuberantly.

“Kyaak...!”

“Kyak!”

Ian raised the beef. The goblins next to him also raised their meat. Ian placed the beef in his mouth and ate it all at once. The goblins also ate the beef with him. 10 goblins and one orc swallowed the beef.

Munch!

The goblins' eyes filled with tears as they ate the delicious beef. Ian admired how well it was cooked. It was a match for any restaurant's steak. However, one piece of beef wasn't enough for an orc. The goblins handed out some grass and Ian filled his stomach with the vegetation.

The goblins were hungry but they didn't eat that much because their bodies were small. Ian ate all of the grass that they left behind.

“Thank you for the meal.”

“No kyak. We should thank you kieek. It is the first time that we’ve had an orc as a guest kyaak.”

He shared a conversation with Kyawak.

The goblins originally dwelled to the north of Orcrox Fortress, but there was a problem and the goblins recently started to head south. Not long ago, Grom had been given a goblin subjugation mission.

The monsters in the north were rough and there were powerful mutants. Direwolves became bigger and trolls became more oppressive. Ogres also popped up and attacked other monsters indiscriminately.

“We were forced to come down here kyaak. Then it overlapped with the orc territory kyaack. So we are moving further south kyak.”

The goblins were forced to go south.

“Something scary has obviously appeared in the north kyaak. The orcs should pay attention kieek!”

“Hmm...”

The mutant werewolf popped into his head. The wolves had also

come down from the north. Was there really something unusual happening in the north? The moment that Ian was about to ask Kyawak something...

There was a sound.

Swaeeeeek.

Ian reflexively lifted his greatsword and covered Kyawak.

Chaeng!

An arrow hit Ian's sword and fell down.

“Kyaak?”

The goblins stared blankly. Then they raised their weapons in the direction that the arrow flew from. Ian turned his head.

“Oh, what is this? It was blocked.”

“Did you feel guilty?”

“What are you talking about?”

They were humans. Two men and one woman. The man aimed the arrow again. This time, the bow was aimed towards Ian. As

soon as Ian raised his sword, the woman chanted a spell.

“Red flames that consume the world, rest on this arrow according to my will. Enchant Fire!”

The arrow lit up and the man let go of the bowstring. The fire arrow flew towards Ian. Ian reflexively wielded his greatsword. It hit the arrow but the fire broke out and hit Ian.

“Ugh!”

The fire was stuck to his body. Ian gritted his teeth and endured the burning pain. His status window sounded an alarm. At that moment, Kyawah extended both hands.

“Kyawah – ak! Kyawah – ak!”

Then an unknown force wrapped around Ian. The fire disappeared. The pain also went away and strength rose inside his body.

“What, a goblin mage? That incantation?”

“Even dogs and cats are using magic these days.”

Ian raised his gaze.

The three humans were having a leisurely conversation in front of the goblins and orcs. White stars shone on their forehead. They were users.

“Wait a minute!”

They stopped as the orc spoke, “What is it?”

“I am a user.”

Ian took off the Blacksmith Company’s bandana that he was still wearing. A white star shone on Ian’s forehead. Their eyes widened.

“What, an orc user? Orc? Really?”

“Are you one of those orc users?”

“That story was true?”

The man lowered his bow and said, “Come out from there.”

“Huh?”

“Orc, get away from there. Let’s get rid of those beggars.”

Ian turned his head. The goblins were trembling while holding their weapons. The tree roots and grass that they had been eating a

moment ago were on the floor. Kyawak had a very determined expression on his face.

Ian shook his head.

“Let the goblins go.”

“Huh?” They looked at each other. “Why? Is it a quest?”

“I know these goblins.”

“Huh?”

Their expressions showed that they didn’t understand. Ian spoke again. “They are friends.”

“Friends?”

“Yes.”

He raised his greatsword as an answer. It was a statement that he would attack if they didn’t agree. The goblins watched Ian with impressed eyes. The users whispered among themselves.

“Doesn’t he sound like a role-player?”

“Well...anyway...”

“I’d rather...”

They came to a conclusion and nodded. The female magician smiled and said, “Orc! Then if we don’t attack, can you tell us the way?”

“The way?”

“Yes. We have a quest but we don’t know the orc territory.”

“Where are you going?”

“What was it, Basque? Basque Village? We have to go that way.”

Ian was also heading there. He nodded. “Yes.”

“Yah! Thank you.”

The users withdrew.

Ian looked at Kyawak. It was earlier than he expected, but it was time to part.

“Ian kyak, thank you kyak.”

“Thank you for the nice meal.”

“It is nothing kieek. I hope we meet again someday keek. Beware of the north kyaak.”

Ian extended his fist. Kyawak seemed to know the orc greeting as he bumped it with his small fist. The orc and goblin’s fists hit.

“Stay alive.”

“Alive kyak!”

The goblins all waved. Ian parted with the goblins.

A user asked, “It looks like you really are friends with the goblins. When did you meet?”

“Today.”

“You are really sociable, to be befriending a goblin in one day. Why did you pick an orc? Just because?”

The magician had a lot to say. The men were an archer and a warrior holding a sword and shield. They looked like moderately high level users. They originally lived in the city of humans, but they received a quest and came here.

“These big brothers came to help me. In order to acquire a magician skill, I need to get something from an orc shaman.”

“What?”

“I don’t know right now. It’s a power that an orc shaman has and will fuse together to make a new skill. Isn’t it amazing?”

“That’s right.”

“If I get this skill, then I will have 10 skills. Huhu. Orc, do you have a lot of skills? Isn’t the orc a hard species to play as?”

As the female magician continued to chatter on, the archer asked from behind, “Why are you talking so much?”

“Jeez, what’s wrong with it? This is the first time I’ve seen an orc. Isn’t it also your first time?”

“That’s correct.”

“How long have you been an orc? What’s your level?”

Ian answered honestly. “Level 10.”

“10? You’re still a beginner.”

“I see, then it isn’t too late. You can still reset.”

The tense men relaxed as Ian’s level was revealed.

Ian looked at the map that he obtained from Orcrox Fortress and guided them. The closer they got to Basque Village, the more the surroundings started to change. There were occasional animal skulls hanging from the lush trees and strange altars for magic rituals were everywhere. Crows cried out over their heads.

“It is vaguely eerie.”

The temperature in the forest was cool. The dense foliage didn’t allow a lot of light to leak through. The sun soon started sinking. It became even darker. Something seemed to appear beyond the darkness of the dense forest.

The female magician stopped talking. They walked quietly. After walking a while, a light could be seen. There was a log house with light coming from the windows. A strange black smoke rose from the chimney. They looked at each other.

“Here...”

“It is dark and the path is hard to see. It would be good to rest here.”

“Yes.”

“Let’s try it once.”

The house resembled Grant’s log cabin. It was an orc home. Ian took the lead with the three human users following behind him. Ian knocked on the door.

“Please wait.”

A voice was heard from inside. The door opened and an orc appeared. He was wearing a necklace made of animal bones and animal skins, looking exactly like the shamans that Ian had seen in Orcrox Fortress.

The orc said with a soft expression, “You are alive, young warrior.”

He also greeted the three users behind Ian. “You are alive, humans.”

He opened the door wide. It was as if he knew they were coming.

“I am the shaman Antuak. Guests are always welcome.”

Chapter 21 – Humans And Shaman (2)

Antuak's house was cozy.

Firewood burned in the fireplace, emitting warmth. Ian and the three human users sat at the table as Antuak served them warm potato soup. The users hesitated at first, but started enthusiastically eating after trying the first spoonful. They ate the soup in silence for a while.

“Umm...”

No one was able to open their mouths. Antuak just smiled.

“Is there something that you want to ask?”

“Well...”

Ian and the three human users looked at each other. At length, the female magician opened her mouth. It was the question that no one could utter.

“Over there... is she sick?”

Her eyes were looking behind Antuak.

A female orc was lying on the bed. She was staring into the air with a blanket covering her neck. Even though she blinked

occasionally, all she did was lie down and stare blankly into the air. She didn't respond at all when they had entered. Her eyes were grey as if the colours had faded away.

Antuak muttered with a wry smile.

“Bul'tar...”

Bul'tar. Ian's eyes widened. It was the orc's motto, but it gave off a different feeling from usual. It felt old. It was closer to the original pronunciation. Ian repeated it to himself. Bul'tar.

“She is my wife, Aruna.”

“Heol. You are married. So why is she bedridden?”

The conversation between the orc and the magician created a strange gap, like an old historical man talking to a young contemporary student.

“She has been possessed by a different dimension.”

“Huh?”

“Aruna was a shaman like me. She was interested in other worlds. I warned her about the danger, but I couldn't stop her curiosity. Eventually, she completed the magic to look at other dimensions and cast it. It is something that our spirits can't afford

to see. In the end, she lost consciousness in that other dimension.”

It was a story that was hard to believe. Everyone nodded.

“Now she is forever contemplating that world, forgetting who she is. It is an incomprehensible world where the laws that we know don’t exist. I can only wait for her to come back.”

Antuak rose and stood by Aruna. His rugged hand touched Aruna’s cheek. She was still looking somewhere else.

“It has been only me and Aruna in this house for a long time, so I am glad that guests like you have come.”

Antuak turned around and smiled.

“Yes. Travellers, why did you come to this place?”

The users looked at each other. Ian replied instead,

“They are heading for Basque Village to get some help from the orc shamans.”

“It is a great thing that humans need help from us orcs.”

Antak looked at the staff that he had leaned against the wall. A surge of unknown power was coming from it.

“Us orcs were originally close to humans, until the past wars separated everything. I also had numerous human friends. Yes, humans. What help do you need?”

“We...”

The users exchanged glances. The magician replied,

“In fact, I don’t know yet. I just know that I will find out once I arrive in Basque Village.”

“Is that so? Too bad. I hope that it works out.”

Antuak gave more soup to the archer who had finished his bowl. The archer bowed his head and drank the soup again.

“Then what brings you here, young warrior?” Antuak looked at Ian.

“I’m not a warrior yet.”

“You are the only one who can determine that.”

“I am going to meet Tashaquil.”

“Hoh, Tashaquil. Why?”

“I want to ask what a true warrior is.”

“You are searching for the path of a warrior.”

Antuak nodded. “I hope you find the answer. Bul’tar.”

“Thank you. Bul’tar.”

The magician, who was watching the conversation between the two orcs, got up.

“I’ve never been to an orc house before, so can I see it, Orc Shaman?”

“Of course. There isn’t much to see, though.”

All three users got up.

Antuak’s house was wider than it looked from the outside. There were tools for magic, as well as the animal skulls that decorated the forest outside. The burning candles revealed the weird magical tools. The female magician asked Antuak a variety of questions. Antuak was kind enough to explain. The archer and human warrior followed behind Antuak.

Ian was left alone with Aruna. She was still staring at an unknown place. Somehow, he felt sorry.

“Please wake up. Your husband is waiting for you,” Ian quietly whispered.

It was at that moment.

“Huh?”

A long shadow quickly passed over the wall.

“Heeok...!”

There was also a small moan. Ian hurriedly turned around.

Antuak was sitting down. The edge of a blade protruded from his chest. The users were standing behind him.

“What is this...!”

Ian immediately lifted his greatsword. The archer aimed at him. Ian hesitated. The female magician said in a youthful voice.

“Orc, thanks a lot! This was easily resolved because of you.”

“What are you doing?”

“What’s the big deal? I came to the orcs to get a skill.”

“You said you were seeking help from Basque Village...”

“Ahyo~”

She murmured as fire appeared around her hands. “What help? The Orcs are helping me. If I obtain the heart of a shaman, then I can receive a skill. So don’t blame me too much, yes?”

She giggled. The men also started laughing.

“Well, his wife is sick, so I guess I’ll send her along with him. Is that okay?”

“Keeok...Aruna...she...”

“If she is left alone, then she would just die of starvation.”

The archer kicked the sword stuck in Antuak’s back.

“Cough!”

“A monster pretending to be something else, how funny.”

“His wife Aruna... Another dimension... Puhahat. I thought I was watching a historical drama.”

They spat on Antuak's head.

Ian's fists shook. It wasn't supposed to be like this.

Antuak was just an orc who loved his wife. An orc who was friendly to the guests and made good soup, Antuak. An orc who knew how to pronounce Bul'tar in the traditional war, that was Antuak. It was a short meeting, but Ian already knew three things about Antuak. He still had some secrets of the world, and some philosophies that Ian wasn't familiar with.

All of that was now collapsing, due to that sword. It was an insulting sight.

The users mocked, "Are you mad? Play this game more moderately. It's like you are a real orc, instead of role-playing."

"You could've been a human or elf. Why did you choose an orc?"

Ian rushed forward angrily. The arrow flew towards him.

"Ugh!"

The archer's arrow was fast, and pierced Ian's thigh. Ian failed to win against the force and fell. Then the man kicked Ian in the face.

"Cough!"

“Resisting is in vain. I don’t want to kill you, but it can’t be helped. I’ll just kill you.”

“Even a user?” The female magician asked.

“What is an orc user? They are just mobs.”

“Big Brother, is it okay to kill a user? Isn’t there a PK penalty?”

“Elder Lord doesn’t have anything like that.”

“Is that so? Good.”

The woman giggled. Ian tried to stand up only to be kicked again. The woman chanted a spell. Something invisible restrained Ian. His strength fell. He couldn’t move a single muscle. All he could do was collapse.

He would manage somehow if it was a hand-to-hand fight, but he couldn’t resist magic. Ian was still too weak.

“Keheeo... Aru...na...”

Antuak’s body was completely breaking down. The male archer and female magician searched until they found his heart.

Then the warrior approached Aruna. He stared at her as she gazed towards a distant place and stabbed a dagger in her chest. Aruna kept staring at the distant place as blood poured from her mouth.

Ian pushed strength to his entire body.

“...Kuaaah...!”

He gritted his teeth and twisted. However, his body wouldn't budge. The arrow stuck in his thigh pressed painfully against him.

“Don't fight. It's over.”

The male archer smiled and pulled back his bowstring. The arrowhead pointed towards Ian's head. Ian gave a last hurrah.

“Kuaaaaahhhhh!”

His body moved slightly.

“Kuaaaaaaaaack!”

He stretched out his hand with all his strength. His body moved. Just a little, just a little more.

“What, does he have high magic resistance?”

“An orc? Finish it quickly.”

The archer let go of the bowstring. The arrow pierced Ian’s skull. His eyes dimmed as everything in front of him became blurry. Darker than black. He felt like he would sink forever.

Death.

.....

.....

.....

The darkness blurred.

He opened his eyes. An orc stood in front of him. The orc was standing at the door of a house.

The orc looked towards Ian and said, “You are alive, young warrior.”

Ian was standing... He was standing in front of Antuak’s house. He could see the familiar scenery inside the house due to the slightly open door. A stove, the table, and Aruna. Ian couldn’t understand.

The orc, Antuak, was smiling in front of him.

“Why are you just standing there?”

“What...?”

Voices were heard from behind him. “Orc, why are you staring blankly?”

Ian turned his head. The three human users were waiting behind Ian. The female magician’s eyes were as round as a ball.

Antuak asked, “Young warrior, what did you see?”

“I...”

“See, what is he talking about?”

Ian couldn’t say anything as he looked between Antuak and the users. Antuak had definitely fed them soup inside his house, and then the users had certainly murdered Antuak, his wife, and Ian.

This...

Ian looked at Antuak. He was smiling as if he knew what Ian was thinking.

“What will you do?”

Ian finally realized it. It was the truth revealed by the shaman Antuak.

The three users had used Ian to approach the shaman and to kill him for the shaman’s heart.

Ian opened his mouth, “Magician.”

“Huh?”

“The thing that you have to acquire...”

“Yes.”

“Is it a shaman’s heart?”

“Uh...?”

They were stunned. The quick-witted warrior picked up a knife while the archer grabbed an arrow. However, Ian’s greatsword was already swinging towards his goal. The magician’s head flew into the air.

“W-W-What?”

“Fuck!”

They stepped back as Ian moved forward, swinging his greatsword. The warrior blocked with his shield. Ian used a downward blow.

“Ugh!”

The warrior held up the shield, but collapsed as he was unable to overcome the shock. An arrow flew towards Ian. He leaned back to evade it. He stepped on the enemy’s shield and jumped, the face of the archer approaching his blade. Ian’s greatsword sliced through his head vertically.

His upper body was split apart from top to bottom. The archer fell down like a doll split from the middle.

“Crazy!”

The warrior abandoned his weapons and shield and fled. Ian threw his greatsword, which flew through the air and stabbed the warrior in the back.

“Kuheek!”

The warrior fell forward. Ian walked over and pulled out his greatsword, his body twitching before falling still. Ian lifted his

bloody greatsword.

The man's body turned to white particles and collapsed. The other bodies of the users scattered as well. After the death process, only their equipment remained on the floor.

Antuak just watched all of this.

Ian stood in front of Antuak. Antuak said with a soft smile, "I am the shaman Antuak."

He opened the door wide. It was as if he knew they were coming.

"Guests are always welcome."

Chapter 22 – Orcrox Warriors (1)

Antuak welcomed Ian into his house like he had before. Aruna was lying in bed, staring into space.

Ian and Antuak sat facing each other. This reality didn't differ from the earlier illusion. He felt like he already had a long conversation with Antuak. Ian was now eating the potato soup alone. Antuak's attitude was also the same.

“You killed them all.”

“Yes.”

“You saw what they would do, but they hadn't even done it yet.”

He glanced around. It was at the very spot where the users stabbed Antuak in the back. Ian formed a fist before releasing it.

“You don't regret it?”

“Yes, I don't feel regret.” Ian's expression was firm.

“Was it the right act as a warrior?”

“I want to become a warrior, not a saint.”

“I see...”

Antuak nodded and beckoned, as if to eat the soup. Ian ate the soup. It was still delicious.

“You are stronger than I thought. I am relieved.”

He walked towards Aruna’s bed. Her face moved. Ian jumped, but Aruna was still looking somewhere into the distance. Her grey eyes moved through the air. Antuak stroked her face and asked, “Are you going to visit Tashaquil?”

“Yes.”

“This will show you the way.”

Antuak moved his finger. A faint ember emerged from his fingertip. It revolved in the air and approached Ian, moving around as if it had its own will. Ian stretched out his hand and the ember touched down on his finger. It wasn’t hot.

Antuak said, “I’d like to treat you some more, but there is no time.”

“Huh?”

“Go before it is too late.”

“Too late?”

“Tashaquil will know when you meet him.”

Antuak was giving him an unknown smile. Ian didn't feel like Antuak's words were light.

Ian rose from his seat. He poured a second serving of potato soup into his bowl. The soup warmed his insides. Ian slurped up the soup and set down the empty bowl. It tasted better than he previously remembered. Ian gave a thumbs up.

“The best potato soup.”

“The best is only that much.”

Antuak laughed and shook his head.

“The best potato soup is actually the one that my wife makes.”

“Ah...”

“One day, I will invite you if my wife comes back. I want to show you what the best potato soup is.”

Ian smiled.

“Yes. I am looking forward to it.”

“Tashaquil is waiting. Go.”

Antuak gestured and the door opened by itself. A cool breeze blew in. It was still night outside the door. The ember danced around Ian’s finger before flying to the door, as if it were beckoning him.

Ian looked at Antuak. He was unlikely to forget the serenely smiling Antuak.

“I will stop by again. Stay alive.”

“Stay alive. Bul’tar.”

“Bul’tar!”

Ian left Antuak’s house. The ember was busy. Ian followed after the ember before looking back.

“.....!”

There was nothing. It was just an empty clearing with moonlight shining. Nothing was there in the place where Antuak’s house had been. The log house with the warm light and smoke had disappeared.

He looked forward again. The ember provided by Antuak led the way for Ian, as if it had its own life. That ember, it was clearly Antuak. Ian felt possessed by a ghost. He recalled his past memories. Antuak definitely wasn't a lie.

Ian would meet him again one day. Such a great shaman had told him to quickly meet Tashaquil. His message was clearly meaningful. Ian's footsteps became faster. Ian focused on following the ember, running through the dark forest for a long time.

He burned through the orc's stamina. Finally, he saw a light and some houses appeared in the distance. In addition, various tent-like structures were spread out. It was Basque Village. The scenery of Basque Village revealed under the moonlight was beautiful.

Ian's speed increased.

He could see orcs coming out of the entrance. Ian waved his hand to catch their attention. They came to a stop.

"I am alive!"

One of the orcs responded, "I am alive. You are?"

"I am an apprentice warrior, Ian."

All of the orcs were shamans. At Ian's answer, an orc who was seeing them off came forward. The shamans moved out of the way

for him.

He was a shaman with a face full of tattoos and a striped hide around him that was clearly tiger skin. There was a huge skull hanging from his neck, but Ian didn't know what animal it came from. The force around him was incomparable to the other shamans in the vicinity. He felt like a giant mass of magic power.

Ian instantly knew who he was. One of the great masters who led the orcs along with Instructor Lenox, Tashaquil.

“I am alive. Young orc.”

“I am alive. Are you Tashaquil?”

“Indeed. Are you Ian, the apprentice warrior taught by Lenox?”

“Yes, that's correct.”

“What did you come here for?”

Ian tried to point to the ember that led him here. However, the ember was gone. It faded away, just like Antuak's house. Once again, Ian was confused. Ian spoke the name like he wanted Tashaquil to acknowledge Antuak's existence.

“Do you know the shaman Antuak?”

“.....!”

Tashaquil’s eyes shook.

“Where did you hear that name?”

“I heard it from him.”

“You met him?”

“That’s right. Antuak told me to go to Tashaquil, and said that Tashaquil would be waiting for me.”

“.....”

The emotions in Tashaquil’s eyes deepened. The shamans who were about to leave Basque Village told Tashaquil, “Tashaquil, we will leave now.”

“Wait a minute.”

“Huh?”

Tashaquil turned towards Ian.

“Young orc.”

“Yes.”

“Antuak told you to find me?”

“Yes. He said to hurry.”

“How long has it been since you left Orcrox Fortress?”

“It has been a couple of days.”

“I see...”

Tashaquil sighed. He shook his staff and arranged his thoughts. Then Tashaquil opened his mouth again, “Kinjur!”

“Yes!”

“Take this apprentice warrior with you.”

“I understand.”

It was suddenly decided that Ian would accompany them. Judging by their actions, it seemed like there was no time to waste.

“Where are we going?”

“Orcrox.”

What was happening at Orcrox that required such a large group to head there? Ian looked at the shamans. They were armed. Apart from magic staffs, melee weapons such as axes and swords hung from their backs. Inside the shaman’s clothing was leather armor. Their eyes were also grim.

They looked like soldiers heading towards a fight.

“There is no time to explain in detail. Just follow them.”

“I understand.”

Ian nodded at Tashaquil’s words. Tashaquil glanced at Kinjur.

“Go now.”

“Yes. I am going. Stay alive.”

“Yes. See you all alive again.”

Kinjur shook his staff from the front of the group. An unknown force emerged from his staff. Waves of magic power moved around them. The bodies of the shamans trembled. Ian felt the waves of magic power penetrate his body.

Power rose up inside him. His body was light, it felt like he could run towards the horizon right now. He could feel the wind brushing against his skin. A beast-like sound emerged from his mouth.

Grrrr...

The shaman's spirit magic!

The shamans moved out, Ian also being one with them. Kinjur took the lead and the rest followed. It was like a group of wolves being led by the alpha wolf. They disappeared into the darkness of the forest.

Tashaquil watched them leave.

Silence fell. There was only the sound of his breathing as moonlight fell around him. He was locked in deep thoughts. He shook his staff out of habit, the magic power moving along with him. The moonlight covered his head.

“Antuak...”

How long had it been since he heard that name?

Tashaquil muttered, “You are alive...”

His voice was wet. “Were you alive, Master...?”

It was said in a whisper. Suddenly, an ember appeared in the air. The ember revolved around Tashaquil’s head. Tashaquil stared at it blankly. He stretched out his hand, but couldn’t grab it. The ember danced in the air before merging with the sky.

The ember gradually faded. As Tashaquil looked in front of him, the night sky soon turned bright.

“The shamans have arrived.” Hoyt said.

“I see.”

Lenox was looking at his axe. A dry cloth was passed over the sharp axe. The clean surface shone brilliantly. A face could be seen in it.

“Lenox. Ian came back with the shamans.”

“The apprentice?”

“Yes.”

“How interesting.”

Lenox turned his head and looked at Hoyt. “Yes, what did you see? Do you think he will be a good warrior?”

“I’m sure of it.”

“Hoh.”

“He will be a real warrior.”

“A real warrior.”

Lenox laughed loudly. He seemed cheerful.

“Hoyt, who is a real warrior to you?”

“It is you, Lenox.”

“Don’t act like that.”

“I am serious.”

“Kulkul. A real warrior...”

Then the door opened. An orc entered Lenox’s room. They asked, “Are you really going?”

“That’s right.”

“Don’t be too hasty...”

“It is now or it will be too late.”

It was Tanya, the administrator of Orcrox. She was responsible for the administration and operations of Orcrox Fortress.

“The enemy will just become stronger if we give them more time.” Lenox explained.

“Hoo. I understand. Everybody is waiting for you.”

“I’ll be out soon. Thank you as always, Tanya.”

“It was nothing.”

Tanya glanced at Hoyt then she left the room. Lenox looked at Hoyt again and said, “We should take him.”

“It is still too early.”

“To be a warrior, he has to see the wide world.”

Lenox placed the axe on his back and grabbed the helmet hanging on the wall.

It was a black, solid steel helmet. Lenox looked at it for a while. There were cuts and scratches everywhere due to its long history, but the skeleton was still strong. Lenox traced the helmet with his fingers before placing it on his head.

Lenox's face couldn't be seen due to the shadow from the helmet. Only an intense light shone from within the helmet. Lenox smiled.

“I also want to see a true warrior.”

Chapter 23 – Orcrox Warriors (2)

Ian arrived at Orcrox Fortress in an instant, thanks to the power of the shamans. The group entered Orcrox with a firm expression. The Orcrox warriors and shamans were already preparing for the campaign. Since dawn, the entire Orcrox Fortress had been crowded.

Ian was about to ask what was happening when he found a familiar face. It was Grom, who was surrounded by warriors and responding to something. The warriors questioned him for a while before leaving. Then Grom turned with a sigh.

Ian went up to him.

“What is happening?”

Grom looked over with a startled expression. His eyes trembled.

“How, w-why are you here?”

“I went to Basque Village and met the shamans.”

“.....”

“Why are they doing this? Is a war happening?”

Grom avoided Ian’s eyes.

“...?”

“It’s because of me.”

“Huh?”

“I...by chance...” He stuttered before sighing. “Hoo. Let me explain. I found something strange.”

“What?”

“I went to the north...”

Grom started his long explanation.

He headed north while struggling over how to act like a warrior.

The north of Orcrox Fortress wasn’t a place for apprentice warriors to go. Only the top rankers among the users could deal with the fearsome monsters there.

Orcrox Fortress itself was built to block the monsters in the north. Grom was wandering haphazardly to the north and found something strange while running away from some trolls.

It was a cave in a gap between two rocks, where he managed to hide. The trolls left because they couldn't find him, but Grom entered the cave due to his curiosity.

He walked for a little bit and a wide space appeared. Torches were hanging on the walls. A human shadow stood there. The shape was human, but it wasn't a human. The light from the torch revealed the terrifying face of a rotting undead.

Death knight!

The death knight whispered in an eerie voice.

“Thiss issn't a pplace whereee yooou can sttand ssafely... Intruderssss sssshould beee....”

Grom turned and fled in terror. The death knight chased him and swung its sword, causing Grom to reflexively block it with his axe. Grom was thrown back by the tremendous power, but the death knight also rolled across the floor with Grom.

The death knight's cold hand gripped Grom's shoulder. Grom was terrified and started to attack the arm with his axe. Once, twice, three times, many times. In the end, the Death Knight's wrist was cut off.

“Kkuaaaaah...”

The death knight screamed painfully, emitting a gut-wrenching wail that disturbed the soul.

Grom frantically ran away. The death knight's shouts could be heard from behind him. He ran through the tunnel, out of the cave, and all the way back to Orcrox Fortress. He used all of his strength to avoid the trolls and goblins.

Finally, he was able to breathe in front of the trustworthy guards of Orcrox Fortress. However, the faces of the guards were abnormal.

“Apprentice... What is that?”

Grom followed their gaze towards his shoulder. The death knight's rotting hand was still there.

It held onto Grom's shoulder like it was still alive. As Grom became surprised, its grip became even stronger. The nails pierced Grom's shoulder. Grom screamed.

The guards grasped the severity of the situation and informed Tanya and Lenox. They immediately decided on a subjugation mission. If a death knight was guarding the entrance, it meant that something stronger was inside the cave.

Lenox guessed that it was a lich.

The fact that a lich was located to the north of Orcrox meant that

it was probably attempting evil magic. It was dangerous since there was enough dark power to still affect the hand, even after Grom escaped to Orcrox. Such an enemy had to be killed before it could accumulate more power as time passed.

The decision was swift and the warriors gathered under Lenox's command.

Thus, a raid was created with Grom as the guide.

"This is completely..." Ian said, "Isn't it a dungeon raid?"

A dungeon raid was called the flower of virtual reality games! Elder Lord was no exception. Raid videos were always a hot topic.

"Yes but... Is Ian also going?"

"I want to go."

"It will be dangerous, so you can just not go..."

Grom was somehow acting really negatively. Grom was someone who always rejoiced when the game progressed. Was the death knight that terrifying?

As Ian was thinking this, Lenox and Hoyt appeared in front of the troops. There was also a female orc that Ian saw for the first time. She was Tanya, the administrator of Orcrox Fortress.

Lenox looked around at the warriors and shamans. In a short amount of time, many orcs had gathered under Lenox's name.

Ian was filled with expectation. Lenox would yell passionately and boost morale. Maybe there would even be slaps to wake up their spirits. But he was unexpectedly calm.

Lenox walked forward and the area became quiet.

“Our goal is an undead dungeon. It is estimated that there will be a lich present, but I don't know what the risks are. The worst situation might happen. But...”

Every orc listened to Lenox.

“We have to do it.”

It was a low voice that was filled with a strong faith. The warriors nodded.

“Stay alive.”

The orcs raised their weapons, shouting simultaneously.

“Bul’tar————!”

Shouts rang out through Orcrox Fortrass. Lenox nodded and led the way, the warriors and shamans following behind him. They formed units and a formation behind Lenox.

Ian, who was at the back, suddenly caught Lenox’s eyes.

“Apprentice.”

“Yes!”

Ian was nervous. An apprentice warrior might not be useful, but he didn’t want to miss this. Ian gazed at Lenox with earnest eyes.

Lenox grinned.

“Don’t fall behind and keep up.”

Ian also smiled at his words.

“Understood!”

Hoyt smiled from his position behind Lenox. Gulda approached and hit Ian’s back. The shaman Kinjur blessed the whole unit. It was the first great battle since Ian first became an orc.

There were 50 warriors and 20 shamans. 70 orcs marched through the forest. Their burly shoulders and large size caused an intense momentum as Ian followed behind them.

Grom guided Lenox to the place while Ian walked with the other warriors in the back. Gulda stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Ian.

“Apprentice, is this your first time in a dungeon?”

“Yes.”

“It will be interesting. Kuhahahal.”

He laughed with the halberd on his shoulder.

Whether it was due to the power of the shamans or something else, an unknown force spread throughout the unit. The occasional monsters were swept away by the orc warriors like fallen leaves.

The monsters in the north weren't at the level of goblins or direwolves.

From trolls, giant mantises, wandering wyverns, and worms emerging from the ground, there were powerful monsters that Ian would've fallen prey to if he were alone.

But all the warriors, supported by the shaman magic, handled it easily. Lenox's axe was particularly terrifying. Not even the trolls could recover from his blows.

The constantly smiling Gulda was also awesome. As Ian was defending against a mantis, Gulda ran over and cut off all of the mantis' limbs with a laugh.

The strength of the orc warriors was terrifying.

They soon arrived at their destination. It was a rock located under a mountain ridge. There was a crevasse hidden behind rocks, but there was clearly a cave there.

The shamans flinched as soon as they saw the cave.

"Such intense magic..."

Ian also felt a cold chill down his spine. Lenox spoke to Grom, who had guided them this far.

"Go in."

"Huh?"

"Aren't you going in?"

“I thought I was just guiding you up to here...”

“It will be more dangerous if you are left alone.”

Lenox grabbed Grom’s collar and entered first. The orcs followed one by one through the narrow entrance.

Light from the shamans revealed the cave inside. The warriors and shamans walked in a line. Soon there was a wider tunnel. Their formations were set up again. There was evidence that someone had artificially created this area.

The air was heavy. This was a dungeon. An uncomfortable feeling was stuck to Ian’s body. Somehow, it was hard to move.

Then the tunnel opened up into a wide space. Torches and crystals lit up the inside. There was the shadow of a human standing in the middle.

“...That?”

It was the death knight that attacked Grom. The death knight lifted its sword.

“Youuuuuu oooooorcs... Leaveeee hereeeee....”

It was an eerie tone that seemed to rise from the Abyss. Ian got goose bumps.

“Otherrrrrrwise....a ggggruesome deathhhh... Weeeelcome eternallll painnnnnn...”

A fearsome presence! A terrifying threat. Then Ian suddenly discovered something strange.

“.....”

The death knight took a step back as it threatened the orcs, but it wasn't noticeable in the creepy voice.

The orcs were shaken.

“Not even feeling nervous after seeing these numbers... It truly is a death knight.”

“Ohh...when strong people die, they become death knights.”

“How terrible. We can't lose.”

“Kuock... I will fight even if it means death. Bul'tar...!”

The death knight was getting more distant. It was subtly walking backwards towards a door! If this was left alone, it would get further away. Ian hurriedly picked up a stone and threw it at the death knight.

Bam.

It hit the death knight on the head.

Rattle rattle.

All eyes turned to Ian for a moment. The moment ended, but Ian shouted without hesitation.

“Catch it!”

The death knight turned around and started running. The orcs regained their spirits and chased it. Dozens of orcs chased a death knight through the cave. One orc warrior threw his weapon. The axe turned round and round and struck the death knight.

“Kkuoooooh...”

The death knight fell to the ground. The orcs surrounded it and the beating began.

“W-W-Wait a minute!” The death knight exclaimed.

“What, this bastard can talk properly?”

“Was it just an act?”

As the orcs beat it up even more, the death knight gave up resisting. Lenox approached and grabbed the death knight.

“Death knight, who is the one that summoned you?”

“I cannn’t answeerrrr....”

Peeok!

“Talk properly.”

“I-I can’t tell you. If I speak, then I will be destroyed.”

“When did you arrive here?”

“It wasn’t long ago. I was told to protect the entrance a week ago.”

“How many more guys like you are there?”

“When I was summoned, there were skeletons and gargoyles. There would be more now. There are also several other death knights...”

“The lich?”

“I-I can’t say...”

Lenox struck the death knight, which rolled across the floor with a moan. Lenox looked over the wide space with a determined expression on his face.

“Strange.”

“What do you mean?””

“Death knights aren’t this weak.”

“Then...”

“It’s a trap.”

At the end of the wide space was a large door. Lenox approached it. The door moved.

The firmly closed door started to slowly open, like a demon opening its gaping maw. The darkness meant that no one could see what was inside.

However, it couldn’t be avoided.

“Enter.”

From now on, there was no telling what dangers might be inside. Lenox took the lead and the orcs followed silently behind him. The hollow eyes of the death knight with its throat cut stared after them.

Chapter 24 – Orcrox Warriors (3)

The orc warriors passed through the giant door, which led into a deep tunnel.

The true dungeon raid started.

The first enemies they met was a group of skeletons at the very beginning of the tunnel. Bones were scattered here and there. There were skulls embedded in the walls, rib bones on the ground, thigh bones, and various other bones strewn about. The orcs passed them without thinking.

However, soon the sound of bones moving could be heard.

The orcs warily looked around. The bones were moving by themselves and assembling together. Dark magic power appeared between the bones to hold the dead bodies together. They became bony skeleton warriors. They were the poor undead who died, but couldn't rest and became the dolls of a necromancer.

Ian raised his greatsword. The skeletons holding weapons started to walk forward. However, something else caught Ian's eyes. The other orcs became silent as they noticed it as well. Their hands were shaking. Ian also had a death grip on his greatsword.

Those bones. They were revived orc skeletons. Among the human skeleton soldiers, orc skeleton soldiers approached with axes and halberds, their fragmented helmets sticking to their skulls. It was a miserable appearance without any honor.

The furious orc warriors rushed out at the same time. The majestic magic of the shamans echoed throughout the cave.

Ian also wielded his greatsword. The movements of the bony warriors were bizarre, but their strength and speed were fearsome. His sword bounced off the ribs of a human skeleton soldier while the skeleton soldier's sword aimed at Ian's neck.

Ian ducked and swung his sword again. It hit with a loud clang, causing no damage to his opponent. At that moment, an unknown power nestled in Ian's body and his greatsword shone with a blue light.

A shaman's blessing! If this was the case, his attacks would now work.

The blade slammed into the skeleton soldier and its arm was broken. The skeleton soldier reached out to Ian with its remaining hand. Ian stretched out his hand and grabbed it, his greatsword striking its skull.

The skull cracked into pieces and its strength disappearing from the skeleton's hand. All contact between bones was lost as the skeleton soldier collapsed.

One skeleton was taken care of. Ian wanted time to breathe, but another attack flew towards him.

It was an orc skeleton soldier with its huge axe aimed at Ian's head. He ducked forward and narrowed the gap.

Ian shouted as he swung his greatsword. The orc skeleton soldier avoided his attack and their weapons collided with each other. Ian wasn't a match when it came to a battle of strength. The muscular strength of the skeletons soldiers was of a different caliber, due to the dark magic. Ian couldn't push him away and was instead pushed back.

In the moment that Ian was about to give up the battle of strength...

'Rest...' Someone whispered.

Ian raised his gaze.

'Give me rest...'

It was a faint whisper, like the wind. He didn't know if he actually heard it with his ears or if it was inside his head, but it gave him a ray of hope. The eyes of the orc skeleton soldier turned towards Ian. Something was staring at him from the dark hollow where the eyes should've been.

The orc skeleton soldier twisted his body, the axe tearing past Ian's arm. Blood splattered all over.

"Ugh!"

Red blood covered the face of the orc skeleton soldier.

‘Warrior, for me, honorable rest...’

Ian’s blood ran down the skull of the orc skeleton soldier. His blood, which fell on the orbital bones, was like the blood of the orc skeleton soldier.

Ian nodded. Unknown emotions coursed through him.

Ian didn’t know much about Elder Lord. He didn’t know what type of system it was, nor did he know the reality of Elder Lord. He didn’t know about the artificial intelligence that caused their emotions to resemble humans.

But to Ian, Elder Lord was another world. Everything that he encountered in Elder Lord seemed like it was living in reality.

The orc warriors around him roared as they fought. Lenox’s voice in the front encouraged the warriors. The solemn shamans recited spells for the undead orc warriors.

In front of Ian, the orc skeleton soldier shed bitter tears as he asked for a honorable rest. If this wasn’t real, then what was reality?

Ian swung his greatsword. He had to cut down this shame of the

orcs. The shaman's spell was nestled in his blade, casting a blue glow over the face of the orc skeleton soldier.

Lenox's shout rang through the tunnel.

"An honorable rest———!"

"Rest!"

Ian and all the orcs shouted at the same time. Ian and the orc skeleton soldier collided.

"Team Leader-nim, the system is locked."

"What, again!?"

"It is in Protect Mode."

"What is it this time?"

"This is a new situation. It says that access is temporarily unavailable due to system synchronization."

"Dammit!"

Park Jujin threw away the documents that he had been reading.

He looked at the huge white structure floating in the centre of the system control room. It was a smooth surface with no cracks or openings. This white sphere controlled all of the systems. No, that wasn't right.

It was 'Elder Lord'. That sphere was the world of Elder Lord itself. To be precise, it was the main core system, 'Albino', that computed and controlled everything in Elder Lord.

Elder Lord was run by the core system Albino. Nobody knew what logic it operated on, what programs were built into it, and what exactly it was.

This was all the legacy of the genius scientist Yoo Jaehan. However, he disappeared. Today, there was no one who knew exactly what Albino was. Park Jujin, who inherited control as the genius after Yoo Jaehan, just watched everything as the manager, not the controller.

Those who were called operators and the affiliate of the Myeongsong Group called Elder Saga Corporation didn't understand what controlled Elder Lord. They could only use some surface cosmetic features.

"Yoo Jaehan, that bastard..."

Jujin muttered the name of the man he was always following behind. It was no longer envy or jealousy.

“What did you do...?”

Nobody knew how Elder Lord had achieved such a perfect virtual reality. The roughness of the previous generations of virtual reality games had all disappeared from Elder Lord. Even Park Jujin couldn't distinguish if it was the world real or virtual when he first connected. He couldn't fathom how it was created.

The whole world was going crazy over Elder Lord, but the reality was that it was a mystery.

“Albino.”

Park Jujin said. Albino didn't answer.

“Albino, what is this situation?”

Albino was the system, but it wasn't under their control. Albino usually ignored their questions and only occasionally answered when it thought that they needed it. Albino stayed silent.

“Dammit...”

Park Jujin grabbed his head. It was at that moment.

-It is temporarily unavailable due to system user synchronization.

Then Albino opened its mouth. Her voice was heard. Park Jujin looked at Albino's white body. The white system core replied with a distinctive female voice.

-A user's assimilation rate has temporarily exceeded 90%. For both the system and the user's protection, system access is temporarily blocked.

Park Jujin's mouth dropped open.

"What...?"

Park Jujin fixed his glasses., confusion flashing across his eyes. Albino didn't say anything else.

Park Jujin shouted, "Okay, everybody get off the system and start monitoring!"

"Y-Yes?"

"Check out any user who has this ability! Find the user with an assimilation rate of over 90%. 90%!"

“The number of personnel is lacking...”

“Look for them! The high level kids! Rankers! The ones who originally have a high assimilation rate! Find out if any of them are fighting or are in an urgent situation!”

“Y-Yes!”

“Now find them!”

At Park Jujin’s shout, all of the people in the control room jumped up and ran out. Now only Albino and Park Jujin were left in the room.

Park Jujin looked up at Albino. It was a white spherical machine. The system Albino was once again silent. As always, she seemed to be inside her own world.

Park Jujin sighed and picked up the papers that he had thrown away earlier. The contents of the document entered his eyes.

[Request form]

[The above VIP requests detailed information on whether this person is playing Elder Lord and what character he is playing...]

Park Jujin threw away the paper again.

“We can’t do that...”

The orcs descended into the depths of the dungeon. All of them were reduced to silence. Among the various undead revived by the forces of darkness, such as zombies and dullahans, orcs were occasionally included.

For orcs, the most important thing was ‘life’. Their very greeting involved the topic of life, and their motto, ‘Bul’tar’, was also about life. For that reason, death was even more sacred to them. Their lives had to be completed by their deaths.

Now their dead brethren were being insulted by an evil magician. Cold anger filled the hearts of the orcs. Laughter subsided from the orcs’ face and a sharp momentum filled them. The orcs thoroughly crushed the undead in order to give rest to their brethren.

There were occasional injuries among the orc warriors.

“Kuooh...”

An orc warrior who had his arm cut off by an undead mantis sat down and groaned.

The other warriors sprinkled potions on him and fixed the cut section. Finally, the shamans cast a spell of recovery. The wounded area was corrupted, so it was unknown as to how it would heal. Maybe he wouldn't be able to use his arm again.

Lenox approached.

“Arctar, are you okay?”

“I'm okay Lenox.”

“Go back to the entrance and wait with the other warriors.”

“I can still fight! I will keep fighting, even if I die here!”

“Arctar.”

Lenox grabbed his shoulder.

“This isn't where you will die.”

“.....”

“Like you always said, it should be in a fair fight against a dragon.”

“...Kulkulkul. That’s right.”

“Believe in us and wait.”

“I understand. I’m sorry Lenox.”

The wounded orc hugged Lenox and walked towards the entrance of the dungeon. The orcs who couldn’t fight anymore would wait at the entrance where the death knight had been killed. There weren’t any dead orcs yet, but their fighting power had already decreased by a third.

“M-Me too...”

“...?”

Grom reached out to Lenox, showing off his injury. It wasn’t a severe wound. Lenox’s eyebrows went up.

“You are still able to fight.”

“Well...”

“Apprentice, believe in yourself.”

“Y-Yes...”

Grom crumpled and returned.

Ian asked Grom, “Are you okay?”

“Ah, yes. Yes.”

“I saw you fighting well. Go until the end.”

“Yes...”

Ian cocked his head.

As this dungeon raid progressed, Grom was acting strangely depressed. At first Ian thought that he was just scared of the death knight, but the death knight had been beaten up by the orcs. His mind just seemed to be elsewhere.

Grom followed behind the orc warriors. Ian walked alongside Grom.

Hoyt spoke from where he was standing in the front with Lenox, “Gather your strength. There isn’t much left.”

The dungeon capture had just reached the final stage. They arrived at the end of the tunnel, coming before a huge, spooky door.

There were three death knights standing in front of the door. They were different from the death knight at the entrance. A black haze was visible around them and dark energy was being exuded from them. The entire tunnel shook due to the dark power.

“Fooolish oooooooooooooooooooooorcs....”

It was obvious that they were much stronger than the previous death knight. The eerie whispers of two voices overlapped and spread out. The noise was loud enough to cause them to forget what they were thinking and gave them goosebumps.

The death knights picked up their swords. Only three death knights!

However, just one of them gave off an incomparable pressure. Ian forcibly controlled his muscles and headed to the frontline. The orc warriors also raised their weapons, while the shamans started to chant spells.

The death knights walked forward. Their legs moved, but with a strange gait, like their legs were slipping along the ground. They narrowed the distance in an instant thanks to that. The death knights' swords clashed with the orc warriors.

The orcs were simultaneously thrown back.

Ian avoided the body of an orc warrior and firmly grasped his greatsword, swinging it at a death knight. Strangely, his body was

really light. The enemy's attack became really clear.

At that moment, Ian didn't need anyone else's support. Ian's greatsword shot towards the death knight.

Chapter 25 – Bul'tar

Bul'ta.

The more accurate pronunciation was Bul'tar.

It is a word familiar to the orcs in the present time. It seems that the 'r' ending has been omitted, and has now become the present form, Bul'ta.

The ancient orc word Bul'tar has both the most complex and subtle meanings. In universal terms, it refers to survival and life; however, in contextual terms, it sometimes symbolizes the most important thing or something of high value that the orc must fulfill in life.

It isn't easy to interpret this word in the continent's language, because it has a variety of meanings. In the case of the former, it is possible to replace the word with 'life' and 'survival'. However, the problem becomes more complicated in the latter meaning. This is because there is no word to describe it in the official language of the continent.

It is a word that collectively refers to life, morality, goals, dreams, and the most important things in life. Understand this word is the most critical and difficult task when studying the culture and philosophy of the orcs.

I have met countless orcs. As I moved among them, I could feel the true meaning of Bul'tar. Despite the gap between the two

different languages, if there is a way to express it in our current language, then I would like to do so.

In the ancient orc language, Bul'tar is life. Life is 'honor' to the orcs.

For them, life is the process of realizing honor, and honor is the sum of the most important values of their lives. This orc belief is solemn and religious. Therefore, Bul'tar is life, and is separate from the will of survival.

-Elliot De Pontian (The Cultural Philosophy of Each Tribe's Ancient Language)

The orcs took the offensive against the death knights, Hoyt and Lenox dealing with one knight each. Only they could fight easily against the death knights. Lenox's axe split apart a death knight. Black smoke emerged from the death knight's body and healed the wound.

The fight started up again.

Ian regained his spirit. He thought that he had sliced the death knight, but his sword just bounced off.

They truly were death knights. If so, how strong was the master of the dungeon, the one who controlled them?

Lenox laughed in delight. It was a thunderous sound. At that moment, Lenox's body blazed with a white glow as his body moved at an unseen pace.

The death knight was also covered by a black energy, becoming a dark figure. The two exchanged invisible attacks with only the spectacular flashes of light and the metallic clang as the two weapons collided a few dozen times in a few minutes.

Ian's mouth dropped open. The darkness started to become diluted with light under Lenox's glorious axe. Every time his attack hit, a scream emerged from the mouth of the death knight.

Hoyt also slammed his hammer down and the head of the death knight that he was facing was smashed apart. Darkness flowed from the wound, but it couldn't endure against the torrent of attacks. Hoyt's hammer slammed against the death knight's body several times.

The remaining death knight collapsed under the attacks of all of the orc warriors and their attacks that were blessed by the shamans. Kinjur shouted as he waved his staff, Lightning striking the fallen death knight.

The death knight got up for a final hurrah., rushing towards the orcs in a broken state. It was a threatening attack. The battle continued again, but in the end, it was the orcs' victory.

The orcs took deep breaths. Another battle was imminent. Lenox

had minor injuries while Hoyt sprinkled potions in his wounds. Other orcs moaned from their injuries.

Gulda approached and placed a hand on Ian's shoulder. His breathing was rough. However, he laughed excitedly as he panted.

“Kuhahahal! Apprentice! Good fight!”

But he wasn't as wild as usual. Ian turned to him. Blood was flowing from a deep stab wound in Gulda's chest.

“Don't worry about it Apprentice.”

“But...”

“This isn't enough to stop Gulda. Kuhahal.”

Gulda's eyes turned towards the huge door.

“The dirty undead bastards won't be able to stop me.”

Lenox organized the troops. Once again, a large number of orcs were unable to fight. For the first time, a few deaths occurred. The fight against the death knights was the most intense one. One of the death knights had even infiltrated the shamans and slaughtered them.

The orcs closed their eyes at the bodies of the dead orcs. There was a short moment of silence. Another fight was imminent. After the battle, they would hold proper funerals for the honorable warriors.

The wounded left, carrying their comrade's corpses on their backs. Now there were only a small number of orcs left.

Lenox looked around. The warriors and shamans, including Ian and Grom, nodded.

It was the final stage. Lenox pushed open the door.

The huge door slowly opened with a strange sound. The door opened and revealed the shadow of a person. A magician with his back to them.

He slowly turned around.

“.....!”

Under his hood was the bizarre appearance of a rotting face that seemed to be holding on by force. Bones and rotten flesh could be seen through his robe.

He discovered the orcs. Mocking laughter filled the air.

“Kuhuhuhu. In the end you came here, foolish orcs...”

“Lich, don’t interfere with the rest of the dead.” Lenox stepped forward and lifted his axe. “The person who goes against providence will be quickly taken care of.”

“You really don’t know anything...”

The lich walked out.

His appearance was fully revealed under the blazing torches.

“.....!”

“You orcs... You are naive...”

The lich wasn’t in a normal state. A blue glowing dagger was stabbed in his chest. The life vessel inside the heart was pierced and had a black glow around it.

“Anyway, I also... I... Just being used...”

“What does that mean?”

“They will come soon.”

The lich laughed again. It was at that moment.

Step. Step. Step. Step.

Footsteps were heard. It wasn't the sound of one or two footsteps. It was the sound of many troops marching in unison. The orcs looked behind them. From the invisible end of the tunnel, fully armed human soldiers were moving towards them. It was an infantry unit wearing iron armor. They came through the front door.

"You were right," a human male who led the unit said. He wore a helmet with blue eyes shining from within it. "It is easy to get the captain of the disgusting orcs here with a bait."

The man burst out laughing. His laugh rang throughout the dungeon. The magician standing next to the man nodded.

"I told you, everything would go the way I planned."

The magician looked at the orcs with pleased eyes and slowly took off the hood attached to the robe. He shook his sweaty hair off his face. A white star was revealed on his forehead. A magician user.

The magician asked, "How about it, isn't it like I said?"

"It is accurate."

"There is a link between those who have been cursed by the stars. Communicating with the hidden spy is the easiest thing to do."

“Wonderful. I will remember this merit.”

“Thank you. Hahahaha!”

What were they talking about?

Ian’s eyes widened. It was a story that he didn’t want to believe, but Ian clearly saw it. Grom was slowly moving towards them.

The magician called out, “Hey, Hyunchul! Come here!”

“.....”

“Good work buddy. Now I will push you forward.”

Grom ran and stood beside the humans. He looked down and avoided the gaze of the orcs. The magician user struck his shoulder. “You were dependable as an orc. Are you still going to reset?”

“Yes.”

“I see. Good decision. I will raise you up in the clan.”

“Thank you.”

Ian couldn't believe the sight in front of him. Grom had betrayed them. No, from the very beginning, his mission had been to infiltrate the orcs.

“Earl, I did as I promised.”

“I will reward your group. Is the quest complete?”

“Catching those guys will resolve it. In particular, it would be a huge achievement if we catch him.”

The magician's finger pointed towards Lenox.

Quest. The instructor of the orc warriors at Orcrox Fortress. The great warrior Lenox. He was their goal. Defeat the orcs and kill Lenox. It was their quest, and Grom was the spy prepared for this quest. He became a warrior to gain Lenox's trust. The lich was just bait.

“Hey Lich. You can go.”

“Kuhuuuok...”

The magician user chanted a spell and the blue dagger fell out of the life vessel. The lich sat on the floor and recovered his breathing. The lich started to run. There was a small door near the lich. It opened the door and ran out.

Ian's eyes shook. There was an escape route. They could run over there.

Maybe he could buy some time.

Ian went to Lenox.

"Lenox! Over there..."

But Lenox was looking elsewhere. Ian's eyes followed Lenox's gaze. There were familiar faces among the humans.

Ahh. He had forgotten. The wounded orcs. They were already beaten and had been dragged here. They were collapsed like corpses, except they were breathing. Bleeding marks showed the path that they were pulled.

The earl kicked the face of the orc that was brought to the front. The orc's tusks flew through the air.

"Dirty orc scum."

"Kilkilkil."

"Scumbags."

His kicking continued.

“Die! Die!”

Ian turned back to Lenox. Lenox’s eyes had sunk into his sockets. Ian was furious, but he opened his mouth to suggest that they flee.

“Apprentice,” Lenox opened his mouth.

“Yes.”

“Run that way.”

“Huh...?”

“There might be troops waiting there, but I believe in you. Survive until the end and let Orcrox know what happened.”

“Lenox...”

“We will remain.”

Lenox raised his axe. The orc warriors simultaneously lifted their weapons.

It was ridiculous. The warriors were tired and wounded. The blood covering them didn’t only belong to the enemy, and the difference in numbers was ridiculously huge. It was a battle

between an egg and a rock. The orcs were about to collapse after the sheer number of battles. And the enemy was an army that was completely armed and hadn't lost any troops.

“Lenox...!”

Ian gritted his teeth. They were different from Ian, they wouldn't rise again after dying. Their deaths were a complete end. But he could see that Lenox wouldn't listen to his words. As long as there were orc warriors among the humans, nobody would turn to flee.

“Then I will fight.” Ian declared.

“.....”

“I will fight with you...”

At that moment, Lenox pushed Ian. Ian rolled across the ground. He sat down and shook his head. Why...?

“Don't make me laugh, Apprentice. This isn't a fight that you can take part in,” Lenox said.

Gulda nodded from where he was standing. “Yes. Are you stupid? Don't get in the way Apprentice! Kuhahahah!”

He removed his hand from his bleeding chest. That wasn't the end.

“It would be a waste to use my spells on you, Apprentice.” It was Kinjur.

The other orc warriors started to open their mouths.

“It seems like you’re mistaken because we fought together a little bit, but you will just be an obstacle in the main fight.”

“In fact, we couldn’t fight properly before because of you. Go right now. Flee. Kulkulkul.”

“Don’t look too unsightly as you run away.”

“Stop bothering Lenox and do as he says. Kulkulkul.”

“Run quickly and don’t get caught. I want to fight, so go right away!”

They were laughing.

Tears filled Ian’s eyes. They might be able to live if everyone would just run away. No matter how many died, maybe some would be able to live. But they would stay and fight until the end.

Ian shouted towards Hoyt, “Hoyt! What did you say? The most important thing is survival, life is the most important!”

Then he looked at Lenox.

“Lenox! You must live first! Isn’t our slogan Bul’tar?!”

He appealed to all the orcs. The orcs stared at Ian blankly. Then they looked at each other.

“Kuk...”

“Kukuk...”

The shoulders of one or two orcs started to shake.

“Puhahaha! Kuahahaha!”

“Kuhahahal!”

“Kulkulkulkul! Kulkulkulkul!”

They all burst out laughing. The laughter of the orcs echoed throughout the dungeon. They laughed for a long time. Then the laughter stopped.

Lenox stared at Ian with a smile on his face. Then he opened his mouth, “Apprentice.”

“.....”

“According to you, life is the most important thing.”

“Yes...”

“Then I’m going to ask.”

Lenox said, “Are you alive right now?”

Ian looked at him blankly.

“Huh...?”

“Are you living?”

“What...”

He couldn’t understand what Lenox was talking about.

“Are you alive right now?”

“I am alive.”

Lenox asked, “Why?”

“Huh...?”

“Why are you alive? Is it because you are breathing?”

“Ah...”

“Keep this in mind Apprentice.”

Lenox smiled. All the orc warriors smiled at Ian.

Lenox pointed his axe at Ian. In Ian’s eyes, Lenox’s laughing face overlapped with his axe.

Lenox shouted, “Keep this in mind! Apprentice!”

It was just like Lenox was at the training grounds. “Only this! You are breathing! But that doesn’t mean you are living!”

It felt like his final teachings.

“Just because you aren’t dead! That doesn’t mean you are living!”

Ian finally realized it. The orc’s greeting about whether a person was alive or not didn’t ask about one’s survival. Bul’tar wasn’t just a cry for life.

Lenox turned around. The orc warriors aimed their weapons at the humans with wide smiles on their faces. Lenox said, “You don’t understand this, making you not qualified to fight with us. So...”

At that moment, the warriors among the humans shouted and jumped up. It was a last hurrah. The ranks were disturbed.

“Get out now.”

Those were Lenox’s last words. The orc warriors rushed in unison. Ian couldn’t bear to look anymore. He jumped towards the emergency exit. The orcs shouted behind him.

“Bul’tar————!”

-Elder Lord’s Hercules Clan slaughtered a village and declared it their territory. What do you think about this?

-The method was brutal but in the end, it is difficult to place an ethical standard because they are NPCs. Even other clans...

“Absolutely ridiculous.”

A man swallowed his whiskey. The bartender glanced at him as the man put down his glass.

“Stupid bastards who don’t even know what they are doing...”

“It seems like you’ve had too much to drink.”

“No, no. I am fine. You know me.”

The man nodded. He once again focused on the television screen. The topic had changed.

–How did Elder Saga Corporation implement such a perfect virtual reality?

–Let’s see. It is due to the core system left behind by the genius scientist Yoo Jaehan. There is no public announcement due to confidentiality reasons, but there is probably a tremendous amount of computing devices...

–A genius that we can’t even fathom.

The man looked down at his pint of whiskey. The clear surface showed the man’s haggard face.

He muttered, “Stupid bastards... What virtual reality...? What computing devices...?”

He swallowed his whiskey again.

“Don’t make me laugh...”

He put down the cup and stared blankly into the air.

–All we know is that the core system called Albino is what makes it possible...

What? The man, Yoo Jaehan, laughed. What did he hear?

He stretched out his hand in the air. He was looking at something. He grabbed the air and muttered,

“A god...you idiots...”

Chapter 26 – Goodbye Orcrox (1)

Ian disconnected.

He went to the kitchen and drank cold water. It was dawn, so the apartment was quiet. He checked on Yiyu and went outside. There was a park next to the river. He walked along the promenade as the cold air chilled his body.

He was confused. Lenox died. Hoyt died. Gulda died. All of the great warriors that he had known had died. Even after disconnecting, these unknown feelings didn't disappear. The cold air didn't dissipate them.

The NPCs in Elder Lord had an artificial intelligence. If their thoughts and emotions were merely flashing numbers and data in the form of electronic signals, weren't they like trapped human brains? He couldn't blame himself for being so immersed in the game.

Lenox was Ian's mentor. Hoyt taught him about death. He learned a lot from them. They were more honest than the humans in the real world, more honorable and honest than anyone he had ever met. He could never be like them.

Ian raised a hand to his face. It was confusing. He couldn't find the answer.

Suddenly, he saw something in the distance. It was some children having a dispute. They looked like runaway teenagers. A group of

high school students were beating another child for unknown reasons. The kid who was being beaten fell to the ground.

Ian tried to pass by. He didn't want to get involved in anything unrelated to himself.

The kids discovered Ian passing by and glared threateningly at him. Ian kept moving as he glanced at them with uncaring eyes. It was at that moment.

‘Are you alive?’

‘Why?’

‘Is it because you are breathing?’

He recalled that voice. Ian stopped walking. His breathing became rough. Like a hallucination, Lenox's voice rang in his ears.

‘You are breathing! That doesn't mean you are living!’

Ian turned his head. The runaway youths were talking to the kid.

“Hey, I told you to bring the money. Didn't you listen? Do I have to search for it?”

“If you don't have money then sell your body, you mad woman.”

Why was the world filled with tiresome things like this? Many of the targets he killed had committed commonplace evil. Why did he put a bullet in their heads, regardless of the innocent or the wicked? If reality was filled with so much malice then why were heroes such as Lenox and Hoyt hiding?

‘Bul’tar!’

Ian approached.

The youths looked at Ian. There were two girls and five boys. He didn’t know what they originally looked like since all of them had dyed hair and piercings. A large boy with yellow hair said, “You should’ve just walked away instead of meddling in our business, Mister.”

“Your interference will be in vain.” Another boy said.

Ian decided not to talk with them. He struck the yellow haired boy. Ian’s foot hit his solar plexus. As the yellow haired boy held his breath and bent over, Ian grabbed his head and tripped him, kicking him in the abdomen.

“Keook!”

One person was overwhelmed in a short amount of time. The rest rushed at Ian. He used inertia to drop one to the ground. The back of the head was hit softly so that the kid wouldn’t die.

Then he responded to a low-kick with another low kick. Their kicks hit each other at the same time. However, the other person was the one who collapsed in pain. The previous boy crawled across the ground and grabbed his legs. Ian kicked his abdomen.

He avoided a flying fist and hit the person in the chin. The opponent's legs were twisted and he fell down.

Now there was only one left. The remaining boy didn't dare attack alone. The girls trembled with open mouths.

Ian gestured with his chin. The children understood the meaning and rushed over to their friends. They hurriedly lifted their stunned friends and ran away. Ian looked after them and longed for a cigarette. He had always smoked a cigarette after a battle.

Ian stretched out his hand.

“Are you okay?”

The child who was beaten stared at him blankly. She looked at Ian's hand with hesitation from where she was sitting down.

“...Thank you...”

She took Ian's hand.

“T...Thank you...”

Ian looked at the girl's condition. She would need to apply some ointment. Her lips were bleeding, but she was still pretty. Ian thought for a moment.

“Are you a student?”

“Dropout...”

“Your age?”

“...18...”

She slightly moved backwards. It seemed like she suspected ulterior motives. Ian didn't care. This might be fate.

“Do you have a job?”

“Huh?”

“You, do you want a part time job?”

Han Yeori was in a bad mood. As a part time worker at Cafe Reason, she believed that there was a partnership between her and

the boss. But her boss betrayed her and hired a new part-timer without consulting her. It was even a woman. Not only that, she was a pretty girl who had dropped out of school.

“Excuse me...Unni?”

Han Yeori replied, “Yes.”

“Did you originally do work like this...?”

“Of course. To be a barista, you need to be able to do at least this much.”

“Still, there is a lot of writing...”

“.....”

“It’s nothing...”

Ian left the training to Han Yeori. For the time being, he was going to reduce the amount of time he worked at the cafe. Then he met a girl during his dawn walk. Han Yeori would teach her well.

Ian watched [Elder Lord Times] on his tablet.

-The last Essence grade item has been sold at the Items Valley Auction for a huge 100 million won.

-100 million won is huge, but it isn't a surprise in Elder Lord. The record for the most high profile item at the Items Valley was one billion.

-Due to these things, the number of people viewing Elder Lord as a business has increased. Most of them are rankers. Rankers alone are paid a tremendous amount of money from Elder Saga Corporation, based on their achievement points.

The so-called rankings were calculated using the achievement points. Their rank was decided by how many points they accumulated in Elder Lord, and Elder Saga Corporation paid a grant to the top rankers.

Elder Saga's periodic deposits, item sales, sponsorship support, and the video royalty fees! Depending on their skill level, they could also participate in broadcasts and advertising. Becoming a ranker in Elder Lord meant becoming a star.

“Rankers...”

Ian's eyes shone. That's right. Ian decided to work harder in Elder Lord. He currently didn't have any financial problems, but the more money he had, the better. Ian hired a student to work part-time in the cafe and he planned to earn extra income through Elder Lord.

However, that didn't mean that he would become like the other players.

-This time, the role playing militia leader, Kim Dalkwang is with us.

-Hello. I am Kim Dalkwang.

-Kim Dalkwang-ssi wanted to give an interview about Elder Lord.

-Yes. I am the militia leader, Kim Dalkwang. I don't think of Elder Lord as a game.

-Does that mean you feel like Elder Lord is reality?

-Look at the NPCs. I spend all day with the NPCs, but I've never once felt awkward. I even thought about whether or not Elder Lord is a connection to another world. It is a fully implemented new world.

-I am worried about whether there will be any effect on reality in the future.

-I don't think that is the case. However, I am doing my best to become Kim Dalkwang of Elder Lord. I'm enjoying the game. I have my own way. In that sense, I hate the term 'role-play.' I am sincere and it isn't just an act.

Ian was able to understand the user called Kim Dalkwang. He had lived with the orc warriors and became influenced by them. If Ian

hadn't played Elder Lord, then Yoo Sooyeon would be learning from Han Yeori here. He would've left her and continued on his way, just like on the battlefield.

Ian was deep in thought as he changed the channel. Hot videos were being played. Ian looked at the No. 1. video.

“Uh...?”

Ian's face stiffened and his hands started trembling. The name of the video was 'Boss Mob Raid', and the protagonist of the video was a face that Ian would never forget. The NPC was the boss mob of Orcrox Fortress, Lenox.

The process of luring the legendary warrior from Orcrox and then killing him was completely filmed.

The battle scene appeared. The orc warriors rushed in unison. It was a terrible impact. Even though their numbers were much smaller, the orc warriors slayed the human soldiers with fearful combat power.

Lenox's angry assault in the front was unrivaled, sweeping away the humans like they were fallen leaves. However, the NPC called Earl came to the front and the orcs collapsed under the combined attacks from the magicians.

The user shooting the video giggled.

–You have to use your heads, stupid orcs.

Lenox glared at him, his cool gaze facing the camera. The hearts of those watching felt cold.

–Now, the Orcrox boss mob will die. Look.

The person filming withdrew and the NPC Earl came forward. The earl raised his sword. Lenox swung his axe at him. Both weapons hit each other. The fierce battle continued for a while. The movements were so fast that they weren't even visible.

Eventually, the earl was pushed back. Lenox kicked the earl and the earl fell down. The moment that Lenox's axe was about to descend...

A knight stabbed Lenox in the back. The blade pierced through his body. Lenox gritted his teeth. He gathered his strength and tried to kill the earl.

Another knight stabbed Lenox.

-Kuhuk...!

Blood poured out from Lenox's mouth. The humans continued to stab Lenox without stopping. Within a short time, Lenox was on his knees.

Hoyt, Gulda, Kinjur and the numerous warriors collapsed from the human weapons.

The user taking the video explained,

–The raid was successful. Simple right? It isn't difficult to use NPCs. Just use your heads during the quests. This was the raid video of the Thawing [Balhae](#) Clan, who are aiming to become the best in Elder Lord.

Then he captured the body of Lenox lying on the ground with his eyes still open. The word 'Successful!' was edited onto the video and then it ended.

The reaction was explosive.

They praised the Thawing Balhae clan for killing Lenox, who was thought to be impossible to defeat. They did something that foreign clans couldn't do, and were praised by the Koreans. There were a lot of opinions to eradicate the dirty orcs.

Ian felt something churning inside him. He unconsciously struck the tablet with the palm of his hand. The screen was touched and the channel changed back.

It was the [Elder Lord Times] interview with Kim Dalkwang.

–Everyone who causes a dispute in the city, whether they are NPCs or users, will be equally arrested. I am a militia member

before I am a user. In the process, many comedic scenes were produced...

The Thawing Balhae Clan. He would remember that. He also had a picture of the users who didn't know about the situation and judged the good and evil in advance.

Ian's life was peaceful. Ever since he left the military, he served guests at the cafe and spent his everyday life with Yiyu. It was a continuation of a relaxing everyday life, rather than trying to achieve a goal.

But now Ian had a job to do.

God had decided to distort his face. He would show them what an orc warrior was.

The voice of the militia leader, Kim Dalkwang, continued flowing from the tablet.

-In any case, if a user or NPC does something wrong, then they should be arrested. There are no exceptions.

Chapter 27 – Goodbye Orcrox (2)

Candles shone in the darkness. Tashaquil closed his eyes as he mumbled and recited an old language. The fires of the candles shook in accordance with his whispers.

Ian was sitting in front of Tashaquil and listening to his voice. His mind was elevated, as if he were hypnotized. The spirit floated in the air beyond the constraints of the body.

“Artani mokaw dom de quakwa bul’tar misaterioak... De’sar quak kisame ilxone qfwfq...”

A bizarre echo shook Ian. Ian’s spirit sank down into the depths as it followed Tashaquil’s voice.

At some point, Ian became surrounded by darkness. In the darkness, two lights turned towards Ian.

Ian looked around. There were no candles, no Tashaquil, nothing. There were only two eyes staring at him in the darkness. Ian faced it. The moment that their eyes met, Ian felt like his soul was being sucked in, and formed a fist to resist it. He felt many minds converging endlessly.

Ian gritted his teeth. At that moment, many lights appeared at once. Two, four, eight, sixteen pairs of eyes. Then dozens and hundreds of eyes gazed at Ian. Their outlines were revealed.

Ian's eyes widened. It was the faces of the warriors. Ian spotted Leyteno holding a greatsword. He also saw Gloin with an axe. The great warriors from the Hall of Fame, and many other orc warriors were watching Ian.

He then looked at the person closest to him.

Lenox. Lenox whispered to Ian. Ian focused on listening to him. However, Lenox's voice was inaudible. Ian shook his head. Lenox smiled and spoke again. Ian still had no idea.

Lenox nodded. Then Ian extended a fist. It was a rough hand covered with the wounds of battle. Ian's fist bumped into Lenox's heavy fist.

At that moment, the world turned dark again.

.....

Ian opened his eyes. He was in front of Tashaquil.

Tashaquil whispered, "Young orc, what are you seeking?"

Ian's head became blank. Only one word surfaced and filled his head. It was engraved into his mind.

Honor.

“What do you want to achieve?”

Honor.

“Why do you walk the path of a warrior?”

Tashaquil looked at Ian, his two eyes staring deeply into Ian’s soul. Ian couldn’t move his body, he couldn’t even part his lips. One word appeared in his head, and it was his only answer.

Honor.

His face and body became numb. Heat slammed into Ian. Ian’s face distorted, but he endured the pain. He stared at Tashaquil without bending his waist.

Honor.

Tashaquil whispered,

“Then look into yourself. I am the hawk of the north, the blue guardian of the sunrise. The pale blue standard bearer who guides the shamans, Tashaquil. Warrior, who is beginning your long journey. What is your name?”

Ian tried to answer with his name. But his mouth didn’t seem to move. Instead, a strange sound echoed through his mind. It was a

word he had heard for the first time.

Tashaquil stared into Ian's eyes. He smiled like he knew everything.

All the lights went out.

“Remember that name.”

Tashaquil rose from his position. It was a ceremony that seemed to be over in an instant, but also felt like it took a long time. Ian couldn't guess how much time had passed. His whole body soaked with sweat.

Tashaquil walked up to a window. That cloth that blocked the sun was removed. Sunlight entered Ian's eyes.

The ceremony to become a warrior was over. Ian was now a warrior.

Tashaquil gave something to Ian. It was a mirror. Ian looked at himself in the mirror.

His appearance differed from before. The tattoos symbolizing an orc warrior ran from his face down to his body. He could feel an unknown power running through the tattoos towards the inside of his body.

Tashaquil spoke, “Young warrior.”

He was in deep sorrow after the death of Lenox, but his eyes were still clear. Lenox might be the one who trained the warriors, but Tashaquil always conducted the ceremony that turned them into warriors. He was the guide who revealed the way.

“What is your name?”

At that point, a nostalgic voice came to mind.

‘Become a warrior! Then you will receive a new name! So I won’t remember your name!’

Ian replied.

“My name is...”

Lenox’s voice rang in his ears.

‘Become a warrior!’

The remains of the orc warriors were collected from the dungeon. Surprisingly, Hoyt survived.

Hoyt had been found bloodied among the bodies of the other orc warriors. The orcs thought he was dead. But when they lifted his body to move it, they found that he was faintly breathing. He had collapsed and his mind still wasn't recovered. Even though he was alive, he was unconscious, and wouldn't be able to move for a while. According to the shamans, he wouldn't wake up for a while.

The funeral for the warriors was solemnly held. Orcs from around the continent gathered as a last tribute to Lenox. Well known orcs, those who lived in seclusion, and other legendary orcs appeared.

The hunter Zankus, who shot down the sun, was the first to arrive. He was followed by the mountain smasher Kumarak, the abyss shaman Wallachwi, Anya the mad slaughterer and many other strong orcs. Those who came to express their condolences continued without end.

The funeral hymns echoed around Orcrox. Lenox's steel helmet was left at the training grounds where he always yelled. He would watch over the warriors there forever.

[Status Window]

‘Person Pursuing the Pinnacle’ Ian, Orc Warrior

Level: 16

Achievement Points: 2420

Assimilation: 70%¹

Abilities:

Orc Warrior's Strength (Special)

Orc Warrior's Recovery (Special)

Leyteno's Greatsword Technique (Rare)

Indomitable Fighting Spirit (Rare)

Mind's Eye (Special)

Tattoos of Honor (Rare)

There were a lot of changes.

As soon as Ian escaped through the dungeon's emergency exit, he found the body of the lich. The soldiers left in the rear had killed the lich. Their blades turned towards Ian.

However, Ian exerted an incredible power and killed them. He

couldn't remember what happened but he had ended up covered in blood. He recalled seeing the message windows flash faintly as the assimilation rate rose.

By the time he recovered his spirit, he was a bloody mess in front of Orcrox Fortress. His skills proficiency, level and achievement points had risen significantly.

First, all his basic abilities had risen and Orc's Greatsword Technique had gone up two stages to become the rare grade Leyteno's Greatsword Technique. In addition, tattoos were engraved after the warrior's ceremony was over and the rare grade ability, Tattoos of Honor, was acquired. The exact abilities of this skill were still unknown.

Now Ian felt strong enough to be called a warrior.

Ian had to leave Orcrox Fortress. His first goal was to find Thawing Balhae Clan and the traitor Grom. The human magician had called him Hyunchul. They were now Ian's target.

However, he was still lacking strength. He would leave Orcrox, build up his power, and pay them back.

"I will get revenge on the human earl," Anya the mad slaughterer said.

She was a berserk orc. Anja had a group of orc warriors who only followed her. All of them were bloodthirsty killers like her.

The mountain smasher Kumarak agreed. “I will help.”

“I don’t need an over-sized idiot like you.”

“I’m not an idiot, Anya! Grrung!”

They didn’t know much about those who were cursed by the stars. So when Ian said that he would punish the traitor Grom, they doubted Ian’s power.

“I wonder if a new warrior can do it.”

Tashaquil shook his head at the hunter Zankus’ question. “He received Lenox’s teachings and watched his last moments. He is qualified.”

“Hmm...”

“I will guarantee it.”

“I understand. But...” Zankus smiled as he looked at Ian. “I will hunt you down if you play stupid games. I can’t trust a person who ran away alone.”

“Zankus.”

Tashaquil barked but Ian nodded quietly.

“I understand.”

Everybody dealt with sorrow in their own way. All of them were orcs who had large or small debts to Lenox.

It was determined that Hoyt would be the instructor after Lenox. After he recovered, he would take Lenox's place. That is, if Hoyt didn't refuse the position.

After the others left, Tashaquil and Ian were left alone.

“Where will you go now?”

“I will first stop at Anail.”

He had to meet Thompson in Anail. He had received a letter stating that the Golden Anvil clan had completed the greatsword. Ian was going to visit Anail first to recover it.

In addition, there was someone else he had to see. Derek. Ian hated him, but decided to borrow his strength for the more important mission. He needed the help of an NPC who had power.

“I will track those guys until the end.”

“Good luck.”

Tashaquil waved his staff. An unknown blessing filled Ian.

[Tashaquil has granted you an unknown power.]

[The unidentified power will settle within your body.]

“This...?”

“One day it will help you.”

Tashaquil smiled.

“When will you leave?”

Ian looked at the sky. The sun hadn't fallen yet. It was time to leave before Lenox's funeral was over.

“I'm going to leave now.”

“So fast.”

“It is like Lenox always said.” Ian recalled his face. “I can enjoy my life, or swing my weapon now.”

A bittersweet smile spread over Tashaquil's face.

"I will depart now."

"Then I wish you luck."

Ian and Tashaquil bumped fists.

He crossed the interior of Orcrox Fortress. It was in Orcrox Fortress where many things had happened. The exit of the fortress could be seen.

When he first connected to Elder Lord, he never expected all this to happen. He just lightly enjoyed the game.

But he met Lenox here. Grant and Hoyt as well. He met Antuak, and then Tashaquil. Ian grew even further through his relationship with them. They had great spirits that were worthy of respect.

As soon as Ian left Orcrox Fortress, familiar faces welcomed him.

"Hey, are you alive?"

"I am alive."

The guards of Orcrox Fortress. They were the orcs whom he had first met. They still guarded Orcrox Fortress like stone statues.

“You are finally a warrior.”

“Yes.”

“It feels like it was just a while ago that you acted like a newbie here.”

“Now you look like a warrior. Kulkulkul!”

They burst out laughing. Ian also laughed. They glanced at each other before saying to Ian,

“Well. Now it is time to ask you.”

They extended their fists side by side.

“Young warrior leaving Orcrox.”

“Yes.”

“What is your name?”

The guards had never once asked for Ian’s name. Lenox was also the same. He finally realized the reason why. At that time, Ian had

no name. But now that he was a warrior, Ian had a name that he could tell them.

“My name is...”

He took a deep breath before replying.

“Crockta.”

They nodded. It was a farewell.

Crockta bumped fists with them.

Chapter 28 – A Proposal That Can't Be Rejected (1)

The orc farmers gathered at the home of Agra, the spiritual pillar of the orc farmers.

It was a meeting to resolve the present problem.

Many orc farmers had left their homes for Lenox's funeral, and the ones who returned were greeted with messed up fields and broken farm equipment. Some orcs left in the village were either injured or killed.

They figured it out. The farmers were engulfed with fear after realizing that it was back.

The return of the mutant werewolf.

Grant, who was once a warrior, had remained in Orcrox to protect Lenox for a certain amount of time after death. The remaining orc farmers were unable to cope with the brutal attacks of the mutant werewolf.

His group wasn't made up of just wolves anymore, but a bunch of direwolves that had come down from the north. The orc farmers struggled to get rid of them. However, the number of casualties increased in the guerrilla warfare against the wolves.

It was a crisis.

“If this continues, then it will be the end.”

“We need to request help from the orc warriors at Orcrox!”

“But this area has already been taken over by them. Anyone who tries to leave will be attacked.”

“If all of us go out together...”

“The children. We can’t leave the children alone.”

“It will be more dangerous to take the children.”

“Then what should we do?”

“At this time...”

Due to Lenox’s funeral, there were no warriors passing by. The orc farmers sighed.

As they gathered and tried to seek answers, the wolves were conducting a raid.

“Help! Help me!”

“This voice...?”

It was the voice of a young orc child. The orc farmers looked out the window. A young orc was being chased by the wolves. He was staggering and bleeding from where he had been bitten several times on his legs.

“This...!”

Big direwolves were chasing behind the little orc. Their angry teeth were only minutes away from tearing into the child. The orc farmers ran out the door without hesitation.

But it was a trap.

“.....!”

As the orc farmers ran out to save the child, a large number of direwolves emerged from the bushes and rocks. A wolf who was especially large looked at them and laughed.

“Dirty orc scum... Today I will eat all of you...”

The wolf spoke. His face was marked with a long scar. It was the old mutant wolf that had been attacked by Grant.

He returned even stronger. Bigger and smarter. He returned to

the north and brought back not just wolves, but direwolves as well.

The orcs gritted their teeth. They might all die. They looked back. The little orcs left in Agra's house were peeking out of a gap in the door with frightened faces.

“Close the door and hide!”

The farmers picked up some farming equipment and weapons. They glared at the werewolf as the wolves gradually surrounded them. The farmers didn't know how to fight, but they were still orcs. The mutant werewolf looked at them and chuckled at the sight, like it was funny. Then he bit the young orc that had been chased.

“Aaaagh!”

The farmers were furious.

“Let that child go!”

“Kukukuku...”

The child slumped down as blood flowed from the bite on their arm. They had lost consciousness from the shock. The orcs' hands started shaking.

“Don't be mad. You will follow soon.”

The mutant werewolf laughed at the body of the young orc on the ground. Then he howled towards the sky.

“Awooooo...”

“Awoooooooooo...”

The mutant werewolf’s body started changing. His muscles swelled like balloons. His front legs rose up, hind legs became stronger and his back straightened. The larger wolf laughed as he looked down at the orcs. A huge bipedal werewolf!

“Today I will eat orc meat.”

“T-That...”

“Don’t worry. Young meat tastes better. Kuku...”

“This bastard...!”

The orc farmers raised their weapons. They trembled as they glared at the werewolf. The werewolf yelled,

“Pounce!”

The wolves and the mutant werewolf plunged in at the same

time. The orcs also rushed to their deaths. The farmers had to protect the children behind them. It was their reason for fighting.

The mutant werewolf waved his huge paws. The orcs looked like children in front of his huge size.

Blade-like claws! The orcs at the front would be swept away at once. The orcs in range closed their eyes.

It was at that moment. The werewolf suddenly bounced back.

“Yippppp!”

The mutant werewolf got tangled up with the other wolves as he rolled across the ground.

“Yip...?”

It was a blank face that didn't know what was going on. The werewolf tried to get up, but staggered and fell back down.

“Yipp...yip...”

The orc farmers' eyes widened. Between them and the group of wolves, a single orc was standing.

“Ohhh...!”

The farmers' faces brightened as they confirmed the appearance of the orc. A burly and muscular body. Tattoos covering his face and torso, with a huge greatsword hanging from his back. An imposing atmosphere that caused the wolves to shrink back!

It was the appearance of a brave orc warrior.

“A warrior...!”

“Ohhh!”

“A warrior!”

The orc warrior looked between the farmers to the body of the young orc on the ground. Then he raised his greatsword.

“I smelled dogs and came running.”

He walked towards the mutant werewolf who still hadn't understood the situation.

“The dog bastard is back.”

“You...you bastard...!”

“I'm glad to see you before I leave.”

“Yiiiiik...!”

The mutant werewolf rushed towards the orc warrior.

The orc warrior moved and cut downwards on the werewolf's body.

The werewolf screamed from the blow, his blood spilling onto the earth.

“Kuheeok...! Attack! Attack!”

The direwolves simultaneously charged at the orc warrior. Dozens of wolves were jumping at one orc, so it seemed dangerous. The orc farmers grabbed their farm equipment and prepared to help him.

The orc warrior swung his greatsword. The direwolves in the front fell down, bleeding profusely. However, there were still dozens of wolves. The wolves surrounded him in an instant. The warrior's appearance was hidden from view.

“T-That...!”

It was a sight that made the farmers' hands sweat! At that moment, a light sparkled from among the wolves.

Seokeok!

Seokeok!

Seokeok!

Blood splattered from the wolves in turn as the wolves collapsed. The last wolf was pierced by the orc warrior's sword.

“Yippp!”

The orc warrior's greatsword thrust into the belly of a direwolf.

“Yipp...!”

The orc warrior pushed off the body of the dead wolf and pulled out his greatsword. The direwolves were terrified and didn't dare resist. The mutant werewolf that was stumbling behind them yelled frantically, “Attack! I'm telling you to attack!”

But the direwolves had already lost their fighting spirit. The mutant werewolf bared his gums with rage.

“These wimpy guys...”

The orc warrior extended his hand and raised it.

You, come.

It was a gesture of provocation. But the mutant werewolf hovered around and didn't dare to attack.

The orc warrior took one step closer and the werewolf took one step back.

“Grrrrrr... Dirty orc...”

“Don't lose your fur, mutant born from nature's mistake.”

The orc warrior nudged the mutant werewolf's sore spot. The eyes of the werewolf became upset as he rushed out with his claws raised.

Kakang!

The greatsword and claws clashed. The blade of the greatsword was scratched.

“I am a mistake? You are nature's cancer, Orc!”

The orc warrior's muscles swelled. He was fighting against a werewolf much bigger than him, but he wasn't pushed back at all. Rather, he overwhelmed the werewolf.

The werewolf suddenly withdrew and slashed out with his claws. He was aiming for the gap where the orc warrior staggered after losing against the force that he was resisting. However, the orc warrior rolled and escaped from the werewolf's attack range. The werewolf's claws slashed through empty air.

The orc warrior stabbed his greatsword in that gap of defense. The werewolf stepped back and avoided the attack. The orc warrior's greatsword slashed at the werewolf's body several times. The mutant werewolf's wounds increased.

“Kuck! Kuheok!”

All of the direwolves had already fled. Now the mutant werewolf was alone. The mutant werewolf looked around. The orc farmers were standing with their farm equipment and now he was the one being surrounded. He wanted to run away, but couldn't because of a deep stab wound on his leg.

“...Grrr. Dirty orc scum...”

The mutant werewolf's eyes shone.

“Kuaaahhhh!”

Using the last of his strength, he turned and ran towards the orc farmers. His massive body made him seem like a bull charging. Sharp teeth flashed from his open mouth.

An urgent situation!

It was at that moment.

Rattle!

The frightened orc farmers saw a blade protruding. The mutant werewolf stopped moving. The greatsword had pierced the werewolf's back, the thick blade emerged from his chest. The werewolf's blood flowed down the blade.

The werewolf flopped down.

“Grr...g...gr....”

His head dropped. It was the end of the mutant werewolf, who terrorized the orc farmers. The orc warrior retrieved his greatsword. The body of the mutant werewolf fell down.

“Then, let's live.”

The orc warrior bowed his head before placing the big sword back on his back, as if nothing big had happened. He started to head back the way he came. His steps were heading eastward.

The farmers watched with stunned gazes. Then the old orc farmer, Agra called out to the orc warrior.

“Excuse me Warrior.”

The orc warrior turned his head.

“Really, we really thank you. Please let us know your name.”

He replied.

“Crockta.”

“Crockta. A nice name.”

The warrior Crockta smiled. He nodded slightly before moving towards the east again. The orc farmers blessed his way.

Thompson handed him the weapon.

The orc warrior, once called Ian, was now called Crockta. The person who was once an apprentice warrior now had a strong atmosphere that felt like Hoyt.

“Here is your sword.”

“This...”

Thompson had been very worried after hearing about Lenox's death, but he was relieved to know that Hoyt had survived. He said he would go to Orcrox to visit Hoyt as soon as all his work was cleaned up.

“Can you lift it?”

While the new greatsword was much bigger and heavier than the previous one, Crockta had also become stronger. He thought that this was the right weapon for him. The moment he lifted the greatsword in his hand, he felt something snap in place. Just by holding it, he could imagine how this sword moved and how it could cut down the enemy.

“It is really great.”

“It suits you.”

“Thank you.”

[Ogre Slayer (Essence)]

[The greatsword created by the Golden Anvil Clan for their lifesaver, Thompson. It was designed for a strong orc warrior. A very small amount of adamantium is mixed in with an ogre's flesh and blood.]

It was an Essence grade item. An Essence grade item was a high-end produce that would be worth millions of won in reality. It looked like an ordinary greatsword, but only those with great eyes would be able to see its value.

Thompson smiled as he saw Crockta's facial expression.

“For my benefactor, this much is nothing.”

“Thank you very much. I'll use it well. “

“Here is the sheath.”

“Yes.”

Crockta placed it in the sheath on his back. He felt a great weight on his shoulders when he carried the sword. It felt good.

“I really like it.”

“I'm glad you like it.”

He looked at the hammer hanging on the wall with a bittersweet expression. “I wish that Hoyt would be happy to receive that.”

“He will surely be pleased.”

“Hoyt... Will he wake up?”

Hoyt hadn't regained consciousness yet, but it would surely happen. Crockta nodded.

“Yes. He will rise up and become the new instructor at Orcrox.”

“That would be nice. I can often go and visit him.”

Thompson smiled.

He started his own company, Thompson's Trading Company. It was still early, but on the basis of his relationship with the Golden Anvil Clan, he would be able to rise up quickly to even threaten the position of the Blacksmith Company in Anail.

At that moment, Thompson's secretary poked his head in.

“Boss Thompson.”

“Uh, what is it?”

“A guest has come.”

“Who?”

“It isn’t for Boss...but your guest...” He looked at Crockta. It seemed like the secretary was still unfamiliar with orcs.

“My guest?” Crockta was confused.

“Yes.”

“Who?”

“Guest...ah, excuse me, you can’t come in here...”

The door was swung wide-open. A face that was familiar to Crockta could be seen.

“Hyu. You have become tougher, Orc.”

It was the subordinate who handed Derek’s business card to Crockta.

Chapter 29 – Proposal That Can't Be Rejected (2)

Derek's residence was very luxurious compared to the other houses in Anail. The flowers and the trees in the garden were placed with great harmony. Fish freely swam in the pond. It had been created with a human's touch, but it looked natural and beautiful.

In the center of all this scenery was Derek, who was sitting at a table, sipping tea. Crockta thought that it was a bizarre sight. The images of the leader of the underworld and a noble enjoying tea time just didn't seem to fit together.

Derek smiled, as if he knew what Crockta was thinking.

"Young Man, what is your taste?"

"Taste?"

"Yes, taste. Your own sense of beauty. Sit."

Crockta sat down across from Derek.

Derek said, "I am sure about my taste. For example, I think there shouldn't be anything else over there. It should just be all yellow tulips."

Derek pointed towards where yellow tulips were planted among grass.

“There should be 13 fish in the pond. No more and no less.”

“.....”

“I am thorough in these types of things. These tastes combine together to make Derek. And one of those tastes is that the agreed upon contract must be kept. I won’t forgive anyone who breaks it. Thanks to that, I was able to gain wealth and power.”

“What do you want to say?”

“My taste has fallen.”

Derek laughed. Crockta couldn’t understand what he was talking about.

“There are problems that I can’t solve. I can’t change the sky, just because I don’t like the sun.”

“Then use a parasol.”

“That’s right. I can’t help using a parasol, so it must be part of my tastes. As I said earlier, I am very thorough about my tastes.”

Derek extended a piece of paper towards Crockta. “Let me understand this.”

“.....”

It was a contract. Crockta looked through the information.

“.....”

“You don’t have to make that expression.”

Crockta asked, “What is this?”

“I am interested in getting a dog.”

It meant that Derek had followed and investigated Crockta. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have been able to prepare the contents of this agreement in advance. Crockta’s lips twitched.

It was a contract to provide Crockta information on the Thawing Balhae, and those who were cursed by the stars. In exchange for Derek providing information on the Thawing Balhae Clan, Crockta would have to kill some of the people involved with Thawing Balhae.

The targets weren’t those who were cursed by the stars, but the NPCs.

“Don’t you want revenge?” Derek asked.

“.....”

“I have decided to walk with you. I have planned a few investments on the premise that you are successful in your revenge. You don’t have to worry about it, since your targets are people that you would’ve killed for your revenge anyway.”

Crockta read more of the details.

The Thawing Balhae Clan was working with NPCs in several cities. These NPCs were rich and powerful in their respective regions. Derek was going to invest money into those who stood against that power. If the NPCs were destroyed by Crockta, Derek would share his profits with the new power that would emerge as a result.

It was a gamble that relied on Crockta’s success.

“Why are you doing this?” Crockta asked Derek.

Crockta was trying to get Derek’s help anyway. The scale might be bigger, but it was still what Crockta wanted.

“Would you be angry if I said I was bored?” Derek smiled as he sipped his tea. “Young Man. I am old and my life is complete. I don’t want anything right now. Everything is done to my liking, so there isn’t anything interesting left.”

“That is understandable.”

Ian, who had become Crockta, might be playing Elder Lord for a similar reason.

“You are a little bit interesting.” Derek smiled.

“.....”

“So I want to watch you. It is a desire to get involved in your journey. If your success becomes my success, then I will be more immersed in your story.”

Crockta nodded.

There were people like that in reality. They said something similar and bought a sports car. Some spent money while others expressed themselves on the keyboard. It was the same thing so he didn't mind.

“I understand.”

“Good.”

Crockta asked for a pen in order to sign the contract.

“Ah, before that.” Derek shook his head. “I have to see your skills.”

“What?”

“Investing in you requires trust, so I want to verify that you have the minimum qualifications. You look stronger than before.”

Crockta looked at Derek. He was unchanged. He had wide shoulders and a disciplined build. The atmosphere around him was like a sharp blade. It wouldn't be easy for Crockta to fight Derek. Crockta had a strong chance of losing against Derek.

Derek laughed at Crockta's gaze.

“Not me. My stomach is full, so I have no desire to swing a sword.”

“Then...?”

“Here.” Derek held out a piece of paper. “If you do this, then I will trust you and sign the contract.”

Crockta's eyes widened. He read the piece of paper and nodded.

The free city of Anail began with the fugitives of each species. Therefore, Anail's back streets had strict laws of their own.

One of these laws was, 'don't kill innocent people.'

In the underworld of Anail, unexplained fights occasionally occurred, but they couldn't kill. Even Derek, who ruled the underworld of Anail, didn't bloody his hands unless it was for a contract. It was a common law dating back to the beginning of Anail. This was a city founded by fugitives who ran away from death, so they knew that death couldn't be reversed.

But it was broken.

"Hah, hah. What did I tell you?"

A woman panted roughly. The two men nodded.

Underneath them was a man with a broken head. The woman stabbed his back with her short swords to verify that he was dead. The already dead man showed no response. Blood gushed out onto the ground.

"NPCs are no different."

"We can also level up a lot."

"Let's do a little bit more."

Three people.

They were the user hunters who attacked Crockta before he became a warrior and were slain. They became notorious due to Youvidser Laney, and couldn't hunt users like they used to. Therefore, they started attacking NPCs instead of users.

It wasn't easy, but they had high abilities as user hunters. They moved around Anail in the darkness and attacked. The murders meant that they became the target of Anail's underworld. And the ruler of Anail's underworld was the cold-blooded Derek.

Derek had already sent an assassin. The hitman from Derek found them. It was the orc Crockta.

“.....”

Crockta hid his body and confirmed their faces. He had read about them on Derek's piece of paper. Ian couldn't help smiling. Those guys still hadn't fixed their habit.

He could understand why Derek gave this to him as a test. There was an unknown relationship between those who were cursed by the stars. Would he be willing to do it, regardless of the bond between users that NPCs couldn't understand?

Crockta walked up to them. The users turned their heads at the sound of the footsteps. Their faces turned pale.

A single orc appeared from the darkness.

His face was familiar. He had tattoos, and his body was bigger, but both his bloodthirsty eyes and black bandana were unforgettable. They recoiled as they saw the handle of the greatsword poking out above the shoulders.

“That bastard, isn’t he that bastard?”

“It seems like it.”

They realized that there was no retreating. They had chosen a dead end to attack the NPCs. The choice of location to strike at the NPC had become a poison for them. The trio thought despairingly,

“We can’t run away.”

“Are we going to die again? Do we have to suffer like this?”

“There is no way.”

They looked at each other’s faces and sighed.

“Let’s fight.”

“Yes, that was when we weren’t vigilant.”

“We have to fight while protecting Brown.”

Jackson, Brown, and Eri. The trio of user hunters took their positions again. Jackson was the spearman who would keep the enemy in check, and Eri would distract with her movements. The magician Brown would bombard from behind. This was their winning tactic, their bread and butter.

Crockta pulled out his greatsword. In the darkness, a slim light flowed from the sword. The users realized that it wasn't a regular sword. Greed filled the eyes of the user hunters.

“If we win...that will be ours.”

“There will be an equal distribution.”

Brown chanted a spell. Unlike last time, he was firmly behind Jackson and Eri. They intended to leave the role of main attacker to Brown.

Crockta moved forward. Jackson's spear moved.

Kang!

The spear and sword hit each other. Crockta deflected the spear to the side and rushed forward. At the same time, magic arrows flew in front while Eri's swords struck from the side. Crockta

ignored the magic arrows and swung the greatsword at Jackson, who stepped back to dodge.

The magic arrows hit Crockta's body.

“Ugh.”

Crockta stopped due to the shock. There was damage. Then Eri's short sword cut his side. Crockta had to back off without doing any damage. The opponents weren't easy to deal with.

“Look, if we do it slowly, then we can win.”

The momentum of the user hunters increased.

Crockta nodded, like he had a plan to deal with the users. He took a charging posture. The user hunters were nervous. Crockta rushed in. It was a devastating assault. Jackson moved his spear in front and prepared for the impact. Brown's chant in the rear came to an end.

It was at that moment. Crockta moved his body to the side. It ended up with Jackson being between Crockta and the magician. The magician tried to move his aim towards Crockta, but it didn't work. Crockta used Jackson's body as a shield.

“I can't see him right now...!” Brown cried out.

“What?”

Jackson stabbed his spear. Crockta avoided it and grabbed the spear with one hand. Eri tried to stop him, but she backed away as Crockta swung his greatsword. She fell down to the ground from the impact.

Brown, who was in a hurry, moved to the side and fired magic towards Crockta.

At that moment, Crockta pulled the spear with tremendous strength, positioning Jackson's body so that it would make him into a meat shield. Brown's magic hit Jackson's back. Brown's mouth fell open.

“Cough!”

“S-Sorry!”

At the same time, Crockta's greatsword slammed against Jackson's arm. Jackson's arm flew away.

“Kuaaah!”

Crockta threw Jackson away and punched the defenseless Brown. The magician was stunned.

Eri, who was left alone, stepped back and pointed her sword.

However, it was her alone against an orc. Crockta approached and looked down at her. The shadow of the burly orc covered her. Within a minute, Crockta's fist had stunned her.

The fight was over. Crockta didn't kill anyone. He captured them with the ropes and gags that Derek's men had given him. Jackson was the only one to notice his intentions, but he fell unconscious after a punch.

Crockta dragged them along like they were luggage. Derek's men were waiting for Crockta outside the alley.

"You truly have great skills."

"What are you going to do with them now?"

"They will be locked up."

Derek's subordinate laughed. His name was Jeremy and he was the strongest among Derek's subordinates, excluding Derek himself.

"These people who received the curse of the stars are annoying. They can revive after dying and can even suddenly disappear. We will use this concrete method on them so that all they can do is breathe."

It was a well-known method to take care of users in Elder Lord.

The so called ‘concrete’ method. The original meaning of it was lost, but the users would know that they were completely defeated.

The users couldn’t die. After a few hours, they would revive in a safe place nearby. Therefore, the users were tied up and gagged to prevent death. Even after disconnecting and reconnecting, they would remain tied up. It was the worst method of not being able to play the game.

Due to this, ‘Fixers’ existed in the world of Elder Lord. They were the ones who were paid money to rescue the users, and get rid of the people capturing them. However, this time, their opponent was Derek. These user hunters wouldn’t be able to play Elder Lord anymore unless they reset.

“Very thorough.”

Crockta nodded.

For Lenox’s revenge, he would use the ‘concrete’ method. He would make the Thawing Balhae Clan quit the game as a group.

Chapter 30 – Plains Rescue (1)

Crockta headed to the southeast. His destination was Arnin, the city of elves that was to the southeast of Anail.

His journey would now begin in earnest.

Users were rare in not just Orcrox, but Anail as well. However, Arnin was different. Apart from humans, many users also chose to become elves, and Arnin was a beautiful city of elves. There would be numerous users, and among those users, there would be Thawing Balhae Clan members.

However, there was a problem from the start.

Crockta gathered his hands together and begged, “Excuse me, Elf Guard. How about just a little...”

“The rules are the rules. Please understand.”

A beautiful elf with blonde hair and a slender figure shook her head. She looked like a supermodel, but she was actually one of Arnin’s guards.

That’s right. Crockta was refused entry.

“Nobody is allowed to enter Arnin except for the elves and the humans.”

“That is discrimination!”

“Then pray to be reborn as an elf instead of an orc. Tsk.”

The elf turned away while sweeping her hair back. She was a dazzling beauty that would appear in photographs, but the angry Crockta just wanted to squeeze her. Crockta couldn't suppress his anger and spoke in rough language to the elf guard,

“Hey, elf with no manners.”

“W-What?”

“Is it because you are pretty? Just because you have the face of a goddess?”

The elf's face turned bright red at Crockta's words.

“Your eyes are finally working properly.”

[The appreciation of the elf Elwina has risen. The orc warrior Crockta's reputation in Arnin has risen.]

Crockta couldn't believe his eyes. Another message window popped up.

[Most cities have requirements to enter.]

[Build up your reputation to overcome this barrier!]

[There are a variety of ways to raise your reputation. Do good things to help the elves of Arnin!]

“.....”

Crockta opened his mouth but he had no words. He had to build up his reputation to enter the city. What was this?

[Elwina’s appreciation has risen. Your reputation in Arnin has risen.]

“No matter how pretty I am, don’t open your mouth. It is nasty.”

“.....”

Crockta chose not to respond. He spat out the words angrily, but it made his reputation rise. Instead, he was able to realize something. This elf was like a princess who liked praise. In order to enter Arnin, he needed to raise his reputation with the elves,

and this elf liked praise. In other words, if he praised this elf, then his reputation would rise and he could enter Arnin.

Crockta forcible opened his mouth.

“I really admire Elwina’s beauty.”

“Oh my god.”

“Beautiful, gorgeous, elegant, do you know what those words have in common?”

“What?”

“They exist because of you.”

“Well, if you say so. Huhuhu.”

[Elwina’s appreciation has risen! Your reputation in Arnin has risen!]

Crockta said, “You have a sweet voice.”

“Hu, huhut. It is a shame that this is emerging from your mouth...”

“It would be even more embarrassing to keep my mouth shut in front of such a beauty.”

“P-Please stop. I’m getting embarrassed.”

“Beautiful.”

“Stop...”

Elwina became lost in front of the onslaught of attacks. Her appreciation gradually increased, but she couldn’t bear it any longer as she tightly closed her eyes and cast a spell.

“Your eyes...”

“A-Ah! Silence!”

“Heeok?”

Crockta was still weak to magic spells. He could endure a physical hit, but he was still defenseless to magic. So he was hit with her Silence magic.

“...Ueeh.”

He wanted to speak but only a strange groan emerged.

“I know that your eyes work properly. I am shy so don’t tell me any more.”

“Uhh.”

“The Silence magic will be released over time.”

“.....”

He sold his conscience for reputation, only to receive silence in return for the praise. Was God punishing him?

Crockta turned around. He would honestly build his reputation. Somewhere, there would be something he could do to build up reputation. Suddenly, the elf guard Elwina spoke from behind him.

“Hey, Orc Warrior.”

“.....?”

“If you go to the plains north of Arnin, then there might be work that will build up your reputation. No, what is that expression? Don’t mistake this for a desire to help you.”

“.....”

Crockta, who was already tired, had no energy to answer. He didn't look back and just raised his thumb over his head. It meant 'I know.' Elwina nodded as she looked at that dignified rear view.

“He is a moderately cool orc.”

An orc with the ability to recognize outstanding beauty and speak the truth! Furthermore, he was able to give a nice gesture like raising his thumb. Elwina felt some appreciation towards the orc. Wouldn't it be really cool if that orc really did enter Arnin?

Crockta, who had no idea what Elwina was thinking, just trudged along. He thought about all the good things he could do to raise his reputation. The best thing to do was to help elves in distress. He listened to Elwina's words and headed to the plains north of Arnin.

Just like the elf city, the forest on the outskirts was filled with beautiful flowers and bushes. As he headed north along Arnin's walls, he eventually saw the wide plains.

“Ohh...”

Spacious plains! It was a spectacular sight, lifting the cold feeling in his heart. Crockta spread open his arms as he soaked in the sight of the plains. By the way, there were things constantly moving on the wide plains.

“.....!”

Ian realized what they were. This wasn't originally a plain. It was just that the trees and tall plants had been cut down and flattened. The main culprits of this situation were still moving and expanding the plains. They were huge monsters resembling rhinoceros.

[Get rid of the triters, enormous gourmands that enjoy eating plants and trees. They are the monsters that the elves are most wary of. Whenever they appear, the forest will become dry and bare. The land that they occupy will eventually become a desert.]

[If you hunt them, the elves might think differently about you.]

He had painted an image of rescuing a beautiful elf and entering the city. The reality was that hard grinding was required to raise his reputation.

Crockta sighed as he entered the plains.

A triter discovered Crockta and made a loud sound. Its cry was similar to that of a rhinoceros, but it had a lot of teeth to chew on the trees and plants. There was a huge number of them. If there were that many of them, they truly would eat until the forest was gone.

“Truuu...”

The triter's cry sounded like a roar. No questions asked! Crockta approached the triters, who were wary of the strange invader. Indeed, they weren't gentle monsters. Their eyes changed and their hind legs got into a position to pounce.

Crockta faced one of them. The triter kicked against the ground and jumped. A strong shock wave hit Crockta, causing him to fall down. It was the first time that he had been defeated in a contest of pure strength since he had become an orc. Crockta got up.

“Truuuuuuu...”

“.....!”

Crockta glared at it. The eyes of the triter slid over him. One side of its mouth went up. Then it looked at Crockta and shook its head.

An obvious provocation! Crockta angrily pulled out his greatsword. The sword flashed and the expression of the triter suddenly hardened.

“.....!”

The triter looked into Crockta's eyes and started to turn its body away.

Crockta chased after it and blocked its path. The triter made an oblivious sound, like it was confused. Its eyes were innocent. Crockta couldn't believe that it had laughed at him just a moment ago. Great acting skills!

Crockta blinked in shock.

This guy...? Were all the triters the same?

Crockta placed his greatsword back in his sheath.

Then other triters started to gather around the first triter. They discovered the orc and came to ask what was going on. Once four or five triters joined, it felt like Crockta was being trapped within a huge wall.

The first triter turned his head back towards Crockta again. Its lips twitched and its tongue moved from side to side. It was as if the triter was thoroughly insulting him! What a rapidly changing attitude happening after its friends gathered!

Crockta's hands shook.

The triters looked towards him and cried out. They started calling towards Crockta like they were joining in on the provocation.

“Truuu...”

“Truuuuuuuong...”

Crockta stood in the middle and listened to their insults miserably. He raised his head with determined eyes. As he was unable to speak, he muttered something on the inside.

To enter Arnin, he had to become a friend of the elves.

Crockta’s eyes blazed passionately.

An enemy of his enemy was his friend! He pulled out his greatsword. The triters jumped at the sight of the weapon, but they believed in the absolute dominance of their numbers.

Arnin, the city where it was difficult to meet orcs. For the first time in a long time, the residents of Arnin heard the battle cry of the orcs echo through the plains.

“Uahhh (Bul’tar)————!”

Crockta’s greatsword tore through the air towards the triters.

An elf user, Yurin, chose the archer class and became confident as her character grew.

She couldn't be satisfied with just the archer class anymore. She was aiming for the higher level elemental archer that was only available in Arnin. However, she wasn't qualified enough, and had to complete various quests to raise her skills and level.

This quest required hunting the triters that damaged the forest.

“Chahat!”

She drew back her bowstring. The thin line shook, like it was going to break. Within a short time, she created an arrow with her magic power. The arrow flew and pierced the body of a triter.

“Truuu...”

However, the leather was so thick that it didn't die. She pulled back the bowstring again. The bleeding triter glared at Yurin. It snorted angrily and charged towards her. Yurin's heart started running wild. She had to shoot again before it arrived. However, her mind was shaken. The eyes of the triter were so wild.

Her hands became tangled and she dropped the arrow.

“Ehhh...?”

The triter kicked against the ground. She hurriedly escaped, but the triter was much faster. It would mean death if she was hit by

the triter.

“No!”

She avoided a frontal collision, but her body was thrown in the air. Blood oozed from a wound on her skin. She didn't pay attention to the injury and escaped again.

She had suffered for a long time after being killed by a monster in the past. The aftereffect of death was that her skill proficiencies fell. Her assimilation rate dropped rapidly and a sense of lethargy seemed to follow her around.

If she died this time, then she would have to go through it all again. She just wanted to avoid that. She ran through the plains with an elf archer's unique jumping skills, but she couldn't get rid of the triter.

She made one last attempt to shoot an arrow, but the triter was too close to her. She closed her eyes.

“.....”

Nothing happened. She opened her eyes.

“.....!”

Her eyes filled with doubt. Standing in front of her was an orc.

“H-How did you...?”

Orc mobs or NPCs shouldn't be here. In addition, he was an orc warrior covered in tattoos! Orc warriors could barely deal with high level users. Arnin obviously wasn't an orc filled area.

The orc swung his sword without any hesitation and sliced the triter. Blood spilled from the triter as it collapsed on the spot.

“.....”

Her heart was shaken for a moment at the sight of the ferocious, bloodied orc.

The orc looked at her. She couldn't help but gulp nervously. With her skills, she would surely die if she met an orc warrior. The orc started to approach.

“S-S-Spare m...”

The orc extended something.

“.....?”

It was a glass bottle filled with glowing red liquid. It was a potion. It was a low grade potion, but it was still expensive.

“A-Are you giving it to me...?”

The orc nodded without saying anything. What was this? She didn't know what to do so she sprinkled the potion that the orc gave her on her wound. Her wound was restored.

Perhaps he was a user...? The orc had a black bandana over his forehead so she couldn't tell.

“Are you a user?”

“.....”

The orc just nodded.

“Why is an orc user here?”

Despite the recent trend of orc users, most of them were unable to overcome the limits of their species and reset. The orc had given Yurin a potion and even bandaged the areas that weren't healed. An unfamiliar confidence sprang up as the orc kept remaining silent. This was a reliable orc that she could trust.

The orc silently gave her a thumbs up after treating Yurin's wounds.

Thumbs up! Was he an orc that couldn't speak? He expressed his

mind using his thumbs.

An unknown bond formed between the orc and the elf, who hunted the triters on these wide plains. Both of them hunted the triters close to each other.

“Be careful!”

They helped each other in times of crisis. This time, the orc was the one in trouble. As he was about to be flattened by a triter, her high speed turned it into a honeycomb. The triter in front of the orc fell down.

The orc stared at her from where he was lying on the ground.

Yurin grinned. The debt had been paid off, Mister Orc. This time she raised her thumb first.

The orc warrior nodded and returned to battle. The exchange of friendship between an orc and an elf!

“...Heh.”

“...Kul.”

The two of them turned their backs to each other like they were embarrassed and snorted.

Chapter 31 – Plains Rescue (2)

Yurin looked at the sky. It was almost dark.

She had lost track of time as she hunted the triters with her bow. It had been a while since she had been so immersed in a hunt. After checking her status window, she saw that she had gained one level, and that one of her skills was upgraded.

The corpses of the triters were all around her. It was a scene made by only two people, Yurin and the orc.

She couldn't see where the orc had gone. She felt regret for some reason.

It was too late to return to Arnin. However, the orc appeared again, walking from the direction of Arnin. He was carrying a bag full of something. The orc placed the bag down on the ground. Then he dug a pit and started making a campfire.

“.....”

A campfire was created on the plains at dusk. After the fire was created, the orc started to pull things out of the bag. Some fighting aids such as potions and bandages emerged, as well as several bottles of alcohol.

He had probably obtained them from the merchants coming to Arnin. The orc, who was preparing something, suddenly raised his

big sword. The light of the campfire reflected off the blade of the sword.

He used the greatsword to dismantle the bodies of the triters on the ground. It was rapid work. The big meat was then placed on a tree branch. At the end, he laid it on top of the campfire.

“.....!”

Triter grilled skewers! The orc beckoned, as if he had felt Yurin's eyes. Yurin walked up to the campfire. The orc made another skewer and handed it to her. It was big and heavy in her hands. Yurin took the skewer and sat opposite to the orc.

The orc was silent. He just quietly stared at the campfire. Yurin's heart eased. She felt an unknown sense of comfort from the orc. She didn't have to force herself to maintain a conversation like she did with others. She just enjoyed this serene moment.

Yurin let out a long sigh as she looked up at the sky. There were countless stars in the sky. It was a beautiful night sky that could never be seen in South Korea, where she lived in reality. The stars shining over the plains, the sound of a campfire, and the fragrant smell of meat.

She just enjoyed the comfort of this moment. Her mind became calm.

Suddenly, the orc gave her something.

“.....?”

It was alcohol. Yurin accepted it. The orc picked up another bottle from the ground and took a sip.

“.....!”

She had seen this scene a lot somewhere.

Yes, the Western films. On the screen, the wild and violent western troops would exchange meat and alcohol silently in the wilderness. Yurin felt like she had become a gunman who met a barbarian or a ghastly outlaw in the wilderness. The other person was a bad person, but they fought together and a subtle friendship was formed!

Yurin drank heavily at the thought, the hot liquid flowing down her throat. She wiped her mouth with her sleeve.

The orc nodded and gave her another bottle of alcohol. Yurin and the orc drank from the alcohol bottles.

The triter meat was cooked. The orc and Yurin bit into it. It was a little chewy, but she didn't care. They were now the outlaws of the plains who were chewing on triter meat. Was this why other users fell into role-playing? Yurin felt free. She squeezed the oil out and ate the meat.

The moon shone over the dead bodies of the triters around them.

Meanwhile, Yurin and the orc continued to drink. They became quite tipsy. Yurin and the orc didn't talk in words. Just tapping the bottles against each other was enough. Everything was clear with alcohol.

It was at that moment. There was the sound of footsteps and people talking.

Yurin frowned. Somehow, she felt like they were intruding on this historic time.

“I have to work hard to build up my reputation in Arnin.”

“Isn't it night time?”

“Just do it. Perhaps there is a skill that will brighten up the night sky.”

Based on the dialogue, they were users.

It felt like they were roles designed to crash this well-formed stage. It was like a loud alarm making a dissonant sound that ruined the music the best orchestra was playing.

She didn't want to talk about hunting with them or what their levels and skills were. Yurin was tired of playing the hard game

without being able to look forward. At that moment, she just wanted to stay in the world that she had made with the orc.

Yurin pulled out a cloth cap from her bag. It was to hide the mark on her forehead. The orc looked at her but Yurin just smiled.

They both raised the bottles again. The sound of footsteps was getting closer.

“Eh...? Fire?”

Instead of turning around, she took a swig from the bottle and swallowed the alcohol. Then she chewed on the triter meat.

The dwarf user Gilliam came to Arnin to meet his friend, the human user Puri, only to be denied entry. People from other species said that he should build up his reputation to enter Arnin. Most of them headed to the north of Arnin to hunt the triters.

Despite it being night, Gilliam led Puri towards the plains.

He only saw the tough blacksmiths and warriors in the dwarf villages, so he wanted to see the beautiful city of the elves. Even the cold guard was like a beauty from a photograph. Once he got inside, many beautiful people would be moving around.

With these expectations, he tried to quickly hunt the triters. However, the plains were calm. He couldn't see any signs of the triters that were constantly eating plants every day. There was just the light of a fire from a corner of the plains.

“Eh...? Fire?”

Gilliam and Puri walked towards the fire. Some users or NPCs seemed to be camping. They wanted to ask about the triters.

However, Gilliam and Puri gradually fell silent as they approached the campfire. It was because they quickly realized. The ridges in the darkness that they thought were rocks, actually weren't rocks. It was the corpses of the triters that were scattered around the campfire. Numerous triters were dead. There was also the rotten smell of blood.

Gilliam and Puri looked at each other. Signs of anxiety were clearly evident. All of the corpses of the triters were divided into parts or riddled with holes, so mangled that they couldn't be recognized. It was a disastrous scene. How long had these people been killing to slaughter so many triters?

They guessed that the owners of the campfire were the cause. They wanted to step back, but a strong curiosity prompted them to identify the faintly visible people. They drew closer to the campfire.

“.....!”

Gilliam and Puri stopped. The first thing they saw was the menacing face of an orc. An orc warrior with full body and face tattoos! He raised an alcohol bottle with a cavalier expression as a way to greet the visitors.

The second person had their backs to Gillam and Puri, so they couldn't see them clearly. A female with long hair. She turned her head to look at them. She was a beautiful female elf.

But the atmosphere around her was different from the other elves they knew. Her idle eyes seemed like they could slaughter someone at any minute. The elf drank with a bottle in one hand and a huge meat skewer in the other, regardless of the visitors. The sight of a beauty wiping the alcohol with her sleeve!

She turned towards the campfire again like she wasn't interested in them. Gilliam and Puri didn't know what to do. The elf opened her mouth.

“Are you going to just stand there?”

It was a delicate yet decadent voice. It was seductive but also filled with an unknown killing intent. The voice also seemed like a warning. A warning for them not to sit down!

If they were given an opportunity to nickname her, they would call her this. Venomous spider! The black widow spider who was seductive but would ultimately lead men to their destruction!

“W-We are just passing by...”

“Sit.”

Thanks to her, they sat quietly at the campfire.

Gilliam and Puri sat down and watched. The orc and elf drank from the bottles again without worrying about them. Were these two truly the ones who massacred the triters?

Gilliam couldn't suppress his curiosity and asked.

“Many triters were killed.”

“.....”

“It stinks of blood here. Are you skilled?”

At the mention of the bloody smell, the orc warrior Crockta sniffed. He didn't smell anything. He breathed deeply like he was holding his breath. He had spent all day on the plains so he couldn't smell the blood anymore. Instead, there was only the smell of cooked triter meat.

The triter meat was from the very first triter who mocked Crockta on the plains. It dared to laugh at him, but in the end, it became his meal. Crockta smiled as he thought about it.

“.....!”

Gilliam and Puri were astonished.

The devilish orc had taken a deep breath at the mention of the bloody smell and then smiled! He was satisfied with the feast of blood that he had created. He smelled blood and smiled happily! He was a natural killer who was born to shed blood or a natural assassin.

They started to think that sitting here was a mistake.

Puri tried to change the atmosphere by talking to the elf next to him.

“You must have suffered to catch so many of these guys. Isn’t that right? Wasn’t it hard, Elf? Hahaha...ha.”

The elf Yurin stared at Puri with a mocking attitude. She was normally timid and dismissed by other users. When she made a mistake, they tried to teach her.

But behold, she hid that she was a user and they spoke so politely to her. They were acting like they couldn’t be rude to Yurin. Yurin couldn’t help smiling. This was why people looked for something different when role-playing. Such a minor change made such a big difference.

“.....!”

Gilliam and Puri were shocked again.

The elf smiled at the memories, like she was saying that hunting so many triters wasn't that hard! It was obvious that this elf was in a state of ecstasy as she recalled the scene of slaughter. Was this woman really so happy about slaughtering the triters? This was like the blood madness that was the symbol of psychopaths. If she was a real person, then she would be a serial killer worse than Jack the Ripper!

Gilliam and Puri looked at each other and started to shake.

They met demons while trying to hunt triters. The triters, who already encountered these demons, were cold corpses. That would also be their fate!

“That, we...”

Gilliam and Puri got up from their seats. But they didn't make it. The orc's heavy hand grabbed Gilliam's wrist. Puri was also held by the elf and prevented from getting up.

Gilliam and Puri watched them with trembling eyes. Instead of talking, they grabbed new bottles and handed them to Gilliam and Puri.

The shadows from the campfire grew. The shadows over the faces of the orc and elf fluttered like evil masks. The long shadows

at their backs made them no longer seem like humans.

Gilliam and Puri flopped down with weakened legs.

Chapter 32 – Plains Rescue (3)

Gilliam and Puri began hunting the triters.

Yesterday, they seemed to have become drunk from the alcohol drifting on the wind and had a misunderstanding for a while. The orc and the elf were ordinary people. Gilliam and Pri split the alcohol and the triter meat with them all night.

The elf, whom they thought was a psychopath killer, was just a user on a quest; while the orc, who couldn't speak, was an NPC hunting triters to enter Arnin. An orc building his reputation to enter Arnin was unheard of and also seemed dangerous. But unlike his menacing appearance, the orc was actually kind.

“Ack!”

The triters were formidable monsters, so there were times when dangerous situations were created. Every single time, the orc saved them. The orc warrior covered in tattoos looked exciting and dynamic, even when hunting triters.

“Orc, thank you.”

The orc smiled and raised his thumb. The characteristic of the orc was that he used his thumb very well in lieu of his voice. When it was good, he expressed his emotions with a thumbs up. When he was angry due to the triters, he would announce his revenge with a thumbs down.

Gilliam also raised his thumb.

“I will do a thumbs up as well.”

Once it was daytime, other users and NPCs started to appear on the plains. The job to build reputation in Arnin was well known, so even beginners often tried it out.

“Dwarf, what is that orc?” A gnome user that was hunting triters in the area asked.

Gnomes were similar to dwarves, but they had a low number of users like the orcs. Their magic power and dexterity were excellent. Since orcs were normally an unplayable species, gnomes were the first to say that they had the fewest number of users.

“He is...”

What should he explain? Gilliam worried about it before replying. “A good orc.”

“Huh? Isn’t a good orc a dead orc?”

“What do you mean? Please be careful what you say.”

“Huh?”

There was a common misperception of orcs. Most people thought that they were rough and ignorant creatures. That they were difficult enemies that yielded great rewards once killed.

Gilliam had thought so as well. But this orc was different. After the sun went up, the orc kept on raising his thumb. The thumb didn't rest, meaning he helped others without hesitation. It didn't matter what species they were.

“You will soon come to understand my words.”

“.....?”

Enyanis, the administrator of the Arnin Plains, saw all of this occur.

“Hoh, that orc, he is quite good.”

Enyanis's task was to control the number of triters and to keep the forest from shrinking. Reputation meant awareness among the elves, and Enyani's reputation also increased when he reported about the work on the plains.

As the administrator, Enyanis watched every battle on the plains. The triters were tough monsters, so the plains were always at risk. But after the emergence of the orc, casualties fell sharply.

“I need to watch.”

However, the orc Crockta just repeated the work with a blank head while receiving the attention of the surrounding people. It was boring. It took time to kill one triter. In addition, if a user got in trouble, then he would rush over to the triter, regardless of the amount of reputation.

He couldn't ignore the warrior's oath. A warrior protects the powerless!

Crockta saved another user's life. As soon as a triter was about to trample on the gnome, it was head-butted by Crockta.

“.....!”

The gnome looked at him with surprised eyes. Crockta wanted to shout, but Elwina's Silence magic still hindered him. That awful woman.

“Huu.”

It was annoying not being able to talk. Instead of speaking 100 words, Crockta just raised his thumb.

“.....!”

The gnome's eyes changed. The gnome seemed spellbound as he

followed in raising his thumb.

Crockta nodded. The people of the plains seemed to strangely follow his thumb gesture. Crockta was going back to fighting the triters when an elf caught his attention. It was Yurin, whom he hunted with yesterday and drank alcohol with all night. For some reason, he felt shy and turned his body.

By the way, the outskirts of the plains suddenly became loud.

“.....?”

Crockta took a breath after finishing off a triter and looked over. A group of humans was entering the plains. All of them were beginners except for the leader, who was wearing expensive metal armor. It was the equipment of a high level user.

It seemed like he was helping out his friends with their reputation work. However, he had a pompous expression on his face.

“Hey, there are a lot of people. You don’t know how I struggled to raise my reputation. Now everything is written on the website. This is much better, it is great. Wait comfortably.”

Then he showed off the power of his sword as he cast a skill. An active skill. A sharp force flew from the sword towards a triter. The triter collapsed as blood was spilled. Finally, the man approached and finished it off.

“Brother, nice.”

“The best.”

The party praised the man. The man's shoulder raised. He looked around the plains like it was nothing. However, he then notice an orc. He doubted his eyes.

“...An orc?”

He looked again and saw the orc. His eyes changed. The plains were filled with triters and one orc. It was easy if there wasn't a group. He didn't know how the orc appeared here, but the orc was his target.

It was a target that could make him stand out more than the triter. The man glanced over at a pretty female user in the party.

“Wait and watch. I will catch it quickly.”

He immediately approached the orc. Crockta felt his presence, but didn't pay attention since he was a human. He was walking to find another triter. Suddenly, there were a cool sensation on his back. It felt like all the hairs on his body rose.

Crockta instinctively leaned down. The blade passed through the air.

Crockta turned around. A high level user with a sword was approaching Crockta. Crockta wanted to shout and ask what he was doing, but Elwina's silence still tormented him. He felt like he would die of frustration.

Crockta stretched out both hands and protested with gestures.

“What are you doing over there?” The other users asked instead of Crockta.

The man shrugged. “Hunting an orc.”

“That orc is working to build his reputation, so leave him alone. He is a good orc.”

“A good orc?”

The man burst out laughing. “Don't say something so strange. I will take care of it. Do I need your permission to grab a mob?”

“That orc isn't a mob...”

“Whatever. If you step in, then you will get hurt.”

Then the man attacked Crockta again.

“Eh? What is that?”

“That, that!”

“Uhuh...!”

The users on the plains groaned at the scene.

“Uwah (Bul’tar)!”

Crockta raised his greatsword and responded. This man was different from the other users. His attitude was arrogant, but he definitely had good fighting skills. Fast and strong. His level was high. Crockta blocked the sword and stepped back.

The man laughed and successively attacked Crockta. It was an opponent who was impervious to an orc’s strength. Every single attack was heavy.

“This is the end of the orc.”

The man pushed strongly at Crockta. Crockta was pushed back.

“You only have strength. You can’t do anything if you meet a stronger person!”

He leapt at Crockta. Crockta hurriedly blocked it with the

greatsword, but there was a strong shock. He had completely lost the initiative.

The man's offensive continued. Every time Crockta defended against an attack, he was pushed back. There was another strike as soon as he restored his posture, forcing Crockta on the defensive. Crockta had to change the rhythm but he couldn't see any gaps.

While retreating, his foot was caught on the corpse of a triter. Crockta's legs got tangled up for a moment. The man didn't miss this chance and rushed forward. He used an active skill. There was a smile on the man's face as he aimed his attack towards the fallen Crockta.

Then an arrow flew through the air.

Kwang!

The arrow containing magic power hit the man's plate armour and exploded, causing the man to bounce back. He rolled on the ground and then stood up.

He shouted angrily. "What is this?"

"What are you doing?" The elf Yurin asked. "Why did you attack him?"

"I am just catching a mob so why is everyone interfering?"

“He isn’t a mob.”

“If he isn’t a mob, then what is he?”

“What is an NPC? Are all NPCs mobs?”

“An orc is a mob. Aish, all of the people here are crazy.”

“Ha. Is that all you have to say? This uncle, I will stop you.”

“I should be the one saying that, old lady.”

“Really?”

The two people had a stand-off.

“In any case, if I continue to attack, then you won’t be able to handle it.”

Yurin aimed her arrow. The man laughed. The elf wasn’t high-level so she wasn’t much of an opponent. It would be hard if she fought together with the orc, but he was confident in his eventual victory.

At that moment, Crockta stepped forward.

He held out a hand towards Yurin. Yurin was able to understand his expression after fighting with him, drinking alcohol all night and communicating together. He was telling her to stay in the background.

Crockta's gaze turned towards the man with an intense gaze. He lifted his greatsword while staring at the man.

Let's do this until the end.

Then Crockta placed the greatsword on his shoulder and raised his hand towards the man.

Come.

No one could fail to understand the meaning. The man grinned and lifted his sword.

“Arrogant orc.”

Crockta took a more careful posture. The man was the arrogant one. Crockta's whole body entered the combat posture. He didn't miss any of the opponent's slight movements. Power boiled up inside him.

[Indomitable Fighting Spirit (Rare) has been used.]

[Tattoos of Honor (Rare) has been used.]

The greatsword, Ogre Slayer, seemed to cry out. The grip felt right in his hands. Even the wind blowing past his nose felt right. The opponent was stronger but that was fine. This much power was enough to defeat the enemy.

The tactics of the orc Crockta was to trample the enemy with strong force, but Raven's speciality was destroying stronger enemies with less power.

“If you wish to die, then I will kill you!”

The man rushed in. His party was rooting for the man.

“Brother! Fighting!”

“Brother, you can win!”

The man cast an active skill as a reply. It flew from his sword. Crockta rolled against the ground and avoided it.

Rattle!

The large rock behind Crockta exploded. It was a technique

powerful enough to leave a scar on the hard rock. However, there was a cooldown on active skills. It would be fine for Crockta not to worry about it temporarily.

“Cool!”

The man smiled as he heard the female user’s voice. The man wasn’t completely immersed in the fight. He needed to always keep an eye on the opponent.

Crockta confronted the man. He saw the moment that the man looked away.

Crockta instantly kicked the ground. Dust rose and covered the man’s vision. He quickly moved back.

“Cough, spit!”

The greatsword flew through the dust. The man hurriedly blocked it. His head had almost been cut off.

The man’s posture was unstable and Crockta used that gap to kick him in the abdomen. The man didn’t receive much damage due to his armor, but his body was pushed away. He wiped the grit off his face.

“Fuc...”

As the man cursed and rushed forward, Crockta threw the dirt again.

“You asshole!”

The man shook his head and retreated. He looked everywhere. He was cautious because of the previous actions. But the enemy had already disappeared into the dust storm.

The weakness was completely grasped.

Crockta ran forward. The man discovered the approaching opponent and moved his body accordingly, barely avoiding the attack. Crockta turned and faced the man again. Crockta kicked at the ground with his feet.

The man couldn't help flinching back. Crockta didn't miss that moment and swung his greatsword. The man's reaction was a beat too late. The man tried to block it but Crockta's greatsword struck the outside of the man's arm.

The armor crumpled and the blade became stuck in the man's arm.

“Cough!”

The man stabbed out with the sword in his other hand, but Crockta had already withdrawn. Crockta couldn't give time for the enemy to recover. He kicked the ground. Dust scattered once again

towards the man who was wounded. The man spat out in disgust.

“Fuck, you fucking bastard!”

He hurriedly stepped back. Crockta pursued him. The man desperately tried to open his eyes, but dirt was flowing down his eyelids. Grit stabbed at his corneas. The man reflexively blinked. Tears appeared in his eyes.

As his vision blurred, the orc's greatsword could be seen. He raised his sword but his wounded right arm was slow. Crockta's greatsword stabbed through the armour into the man's stomach.

The man kneeled down.

“Kuheooh...!”

Blood poured out. It was a situation where he couldn't fight anymore. The victor was decided. All those watching the fight exclaimed from the shock.

Crockta raised his greatsword. It was on the verge of falling towards the man's neck.

“S-Stop...”

The man shook as he looked up at Crockta.

“Don’t kill...”

He raised both hands and threw away his sword. The equipment he was wearing, including the armor, were extremely expensive. The aftereffects of death could be recovered after some time, but the equipment he went into debt to purchase couldn’t.

He couldn’t let this orc or the other users on the plains have them.

He was no longer concerned with the party watching behind him. The man still hadn’t repaid all the interest yet. Through these items, he was going to become stronger and become a user who turned Elder Lord into a business.

It would be an enormous loss if he lost the Essence rated armour that he had purchased with much difficulty. If he lost the rest of the equipment, including the sword, he would fall into hell.

“Please...”

The man begged. Crockta looked at him quietly.

Then someone said, “Kill him.”

It was Yurin.

Within a short period of time, the users quietly watching the

scene started to call out.

“Orc, kill him!”

“Don’t let that guy survive!”

“Kill!”

They were all users who had been helped by Crockta. The voices soon increased. They were like the audience in the Colosseum clamoring for the loser’s death. Crockta looked at them and then he looked down at the man begging for mercy.

Fear and horror were displayed in the man’s eyes.

“.....”

Crockta lowered his greatsword.

The watching Yurin said, “He tried to kill you first. You heard what he said, if this guy had won, then he absolutely would’ve never spared you. Make him pay the price!”

All the spectators, including the users, nodded at Yurin’s words.

“He is a user, a person who is cursed by the stars. He will rise again!”

“He will just receive a penalty if he is killed!”

“He has to learn that if he strikes first, he might die.”

“Kill him!”

However, Crockta shook his head. It was to indicate that he wouldn't kill the man.

“Why?”

Yurin asked like it was ridiculous. The orc warrior she encountered was kind but not weak-minded. She couldn't understand it.

“.....”

Crockta wanted to speak. However, Elwina's Silence magic was still blocking his mouth.

So he turned around instead of talking. As Crockta walked, the crowd split to the left and right. He was heading towards a giant rock. It was the rock that the man's active skill had hit.

Crockta raised his greatsword and gathered all his strength. After Greatsword Technique was upgraded to Leyteno's Greatsword Technique, he was able to leave a mark with it. Crockta placed the

sword on the rock and started carving something with the blade.

The spectators held their breaths and watched. The shape of letters slowly appeared before the audience's eyes.

[Warrior.]

Everybody was confused, but their mouths dropped open as the contents were gradually revealed.

[The fighter has already discarded his weapon.]

Crockta finished with the sentence.

[A warrior doesn't attack unarmed people.]

He placed his greatsword in the sheath. As Crockta turned around, the people on the plains stared at the rock in a daze.

A warrior doesn't attack unarmed people!

“.....!”

None of them could open their mouths. If the enemy doesn't resist, then don't kill. They thought that the orcs were savages and that the humans were civilized. However, it was a human who attacked the innocent orc first and the humans who shouted to kill the man. Unknown emotions stirred inside them.

Who was this orc? Was this an orc warrior?

The orc looked huge as he stood silently in front of the rock.

Clap. Clap. Clap.

Someone walked out while clapping. It was the administrator of the Arnin Plains, Enyanis. He stood in front of Crockta and applauded, his eyes wet with tears.

“You...are a true warrior. The talent that Arnin needed for a long time is an orc! I would like to invite you to our city.”

Had Crockta's reputation work finally finished? The audience cheered. Crockta silently nodded.

“But it will be hard for everyone here if you suddenly disappeared, so I would like to give you a mission.”

Crockta was confused. What mission?

“I will appoint you as the leader of the Arnin Plain’s Rescue Unit. There is no more need to catch the triters. For the next three days, please save others as you have previously been doing. Only then will you be allowed to enter Arnin.”

Enyanis’ proposal of an Arnin Plain’s Rescue Unit!

Crockta nodded without any worries. Those watching from behind cheered. Crockta and Enyanis shook hands as applause rang out.

Arnin Plain’s Rescue Unit, a tradition of Arnin that would remain for many years to come! It was begun by an unknown orc warrior, not a human, nor an elf.

Chapter 33 – Plains Rescue (4)

A university restaurant.

Everybody was eating their meals. The TV stopped at one channel.

-Hello. I am Giuseppe, a reporter from [Surprise! What happened in Elder Lord?]. I am now in the elven city, Arnin. There is a strange thing occurring here!

Behind her were the high walls of Arnin. The camera illuminated Arnin's landscape before focusing on Giuseppe again.

-Arnin is famous for its beautiful elf mayor, but there is something more mysterious than her beauty occurring here. It isn't here in Arnin, but in the Northern Arnin Plains, the place where triters are hunted to build up reputation.

She ran northwards towards the plains. The angle shook like the cameraman was chasing after her.

-What is going on here? This Giuseppe will go and check it out!

She discovered users walking out of the plains. Their faces were covered in mosaics.

-Hello. Did you just come from the Arnin Plains?

–So what?

–People are saying that a miracle is happening at Arnin Plains, is that true?

–Ahh...

A dwarf male nodded.

–That's right. It is a very curious thing. I was pleasantly surprised.

–What is it?

–You will know if you go there. If you go now, then you will be able to meet him.

Subtitles appeared and there was a narrator.

–Who can she meet?

This time, Giuseppe asked the elf standing beside the dwarf. His face was also covered in a mosaic.

–Have you met him personally?

–Of course. We drank and ate together all night.

–Drank?

–That's right. At first there was a misunderstanding, but he is a very kind and nice person. My eyes were opened.

–Wow, is he really that great?

–He is truly...a true ○○.

The last part referring to the character was beeped out. The camera cut to another scene. Giuseppe stood at the entrance of the plains as she stared into the screen.

–Now, shall I go and see the rumored person?

Then Giuseppe entered the plains. The spacious plains were filled with people struggling against the huge triters. Giuseppe lowered her voice and said,

–Now...let's find out who the rumoured figure is.

Then she ran. She ran across the plains and found a user who had just killed a triter. Giuseppe moved cautiously.

–Here... Hello?

–Eh, what? Ah, Giuseppe! Aren't you Giuseppe?

–Haha, do you recognize me?

–I'm a fan. A big fan of 'What happened in Elder Lord?'.

–Thank you.

–But what are you doing... Ah! You came because of him.

The user nodded.

–Ah! Do you know who he is?

–Yes. I know very well. I thanked him for his help a few times.

–Thanked him for his help?

–Anyone who doesn't know him here is a spy, a spy. One spy was frightened off by him. Hahaha.

Giuseppe looked at the screen with a coy look.

–Then...what type of person is he? I'm really curious.

She asked the user again.

–Where can I meet him?

–Hrmm... He...because he is so busy...

The user stroked his chin and pointed in one direction.

–Do you see that rock over there?

–That big rock?

–Yes. Wait over there. It is the place where his legend began.

–Legend?

Giuseppe trembled and made a big fuss.

–Legend! Truly? What legend? And he might be waiting for us! My heart's already pounding! I'm looking forward to it. Would the viewers like to come along as well?

Then she bowed to the user and ran towards the rock. It was an automatic shot that didn't require a heavy camera, but the screen waved once again like someone was chasing after her.

They arrived in front of the rock. It was a big rock. But as they

approached it, they saw something engraved in the rock. Subtitles popped up.

[Do you want to know what is written on here...?]

Giuseppe breathed out and placed her hands on the rock and took a step back in amazement.

–There is something engraved here. This...?

At that moment, the focus blurred. The letters engraved on the rock couldn't be seen. Subtitles popped up.

[It will continue in a moment!]

Then the screen switched to some ads. The customers watching idly in the restaurant started to complain as the advertisements appeared.

“Isn't dragging it on like this annoying?”

“That's right. That reporter, I don't like her pretending to be so pretty either.”

“But what is it about? I've never been there before.”

“I have. I feel like puking every time I see a triter now. It was a

few days of hard work. I even died once.”

“Idiot. You died to those cows?”

“They aren’t cows. You would turn out the same if you made a mistake.”

The customers in the restaurants started to tell their own stories about Elder Lord. For some time, the latest capsule and electronic devices from the Myeongsong Group were advertised on the TV. The advertising model was a prominent ranker in Elder Lord.

After the ads were over, Giuseppe appeared on the screen again. The eyes of the customers turned back to the television again.

–Carved here...what is it...?

It is coarse writing, like it was made with a blade!

The screen was close up so the full sentence didn’t appear at first. Giuseppe touched each of the letters by hand.

–Warrior...

The screen got further away and the sentence on the rock appeared.

-A warrior doesn't...attack unarmed people?

Giuseppe was confused.

-Who carved this? Warrior? Somehow, I can feel the spirit of chivalry.

It was at that moment. Giuseppe suddenly turned her head. Her face turned pale.

-Uhh...?

The screen convulsed. There was a loud sound, like something had bumped into the camera. A triter. Giuseppe wasn't a strong user so she ran away. The person recording her also ran. The screen kept on shaking.

The moment that the triter was about to reach Giuseppe.

-Kyaaaaah!

The screen was overturned. The blue sky of Elder Lord appeared on the screen. The silence continued.

The customers watching the video were confused.

"...Isn't this a broadcasting accident?"

“But that isn’t a live broadcast.”

“Is she dead? Why would they broadcast a death? To show that it’s real?”

The customers in the restaurant murmured. At that moment, something appeared on the screen.

“.....?”

It was a big hand. Thick fingers were seen first. The customers thought it was a dwarf, but the skin was green. The rough hands filled with calluses filled the screen.

–Heook...

A groan emerged from Giuseppe. The thick hand grabbed what was assumed to be the video recorder’s hand. Her body was pulled up and the screen shook again. The sight revealed before them was an orc.

“Orc...?”

The orc had an unusual appearance. First, the black bandana on his head. It was old and faded, like it had been used for a long time. The mark of the Blacksmith Company was engraved on the corner.

Below it was the face of an orc. Intense eyes that glared at them! A big nose, thick lips, and protruding tusks. Fierce tattoos spanned his entire body and there was a huge greatsword on his back. But the most unusual thing was the orc's outfit. There was a red cloth vest over leather armor. In the middle of the vest, a clear cross was drawn with a word embroidered underneath it.

[R.E.S.C.U.E!]

What did 'rescue' mean? Giuseppe couldn't speak and just looked at the orc. The orc looked at her and the person shooting. Then the orc raised a hand.

.....!

The orc raised his thumb and turned around. The back also contained a white cross with words underneath it.

[L.I.F.E.G.U.A.R.D!]

The orc disappeared into the triter hunting grounds. What did they just see?

Rescue, lifeguard. It was like the deep valley rivers, the beach at summer, and the snow-covered ski slopes.

Giuseppe muttered blankly.

–J-Just now, an orc saved us. What is this?

The odd situation where an orc that was treated as a monster saved them! But this wasn't the end.

A user hunting a triter appeared on the screen. The user flew through the air. The moment that the triter was about to trample on the user, the triter suddenly bounced away, like it was hit by a strong impact.

Then a black figure jumped towards it. The triter that had just been trying to stand up fell back down as blood emerged. It was a perfect hunt.

The mysterious orc, who saved them previously, was standing in front of the triter with the giant sword. The sight of him holding the greatsword in the middle of the broken triter was magnificent.

Then the orc raised his thumb towards the user.

.....!

It was the coolest thumbs up that they had ever seen. The user bowed and also did a thumbs up. The orc turned around like nothing had happened and sat down on the ground. He watched the people hunting.

Giuseppe hurriedly approached the user who had just been saved.

-Hello User!

-Uh...? Ah, hello?

-I am Giuseppe, a reporter from [Surprise! What happened in Elder Lord?]. Please explain the strange scene that I just saw. What is going on?

-Ahh... You came for him...

He pointed to the orc. The orc was just sitting there silently.

-That..he is a mute orc warrior.

-Mute...?

-The thing that is occurring here...

The screen changed to a story. Instead of Giuseppe, the narrator started to explain the orc's story.

The situation was this: He came to the city of elves because he wanted to enter Arnin, but was denied access because he was an orc.

An orc actor appeared for a retelling. Although it was sloppy, he

somewhat resembled the orc. As soon as he was about to enter a castle, an elf actor appeared and stood in front of him.

–You can't access.

‘Is it because I am an orc?’ The orc asked through gestures.

–An orc isn't allowed to enter here!

–.....!

The orc made a despairing pose. The narrator explained.

–He was shocked to hear that he couldn't enter because he was an orc. However, he found out that there was another way to enter Arnin...

The orc actor formed a fist and nodded. He headed to the Arnin Plains with a hopeful expression.

–It is nothing other than hunting monsters on the Arnin Plains. But what he saw was many people suffering while hunting the monsters.

The orc actor looked sad.

–He couldn't speak, but he was still a tough orc warrior. He made

a decision...

The orc actor decided something with a firm expression. He started running through the Arnin Plains.

-He helped those in danger.

-The orc saved people.

The pet pigs representing the triters fell and the orc warrior actor raised his thumb at the person who thanked him.

-As he can't speak, this thumb is the best way for him to express himself.

All of a sudden, the atmosphere was reversed.

-Of course, things weren't always good. One day, a user thought of the orc as a simple monster and struck...

The orc actor and human actor confronted each other with knives.

-He was victorious after some difficulty and was on the verge of killing the human.

The orc and the kneeling human were surrounded by four or five

actors. All the humans called for the orc to kill his opponent.

Kill! Kill! Kill!

–But after all that, he made a difficult decision.

The orc shook his head. The other actors were shocked by his decision. ‘Why?’ They protested. The orc looked distressed as he wasn’t able to speak.

–Instead of answering with words, the orc inscribed his will on the rock with his sword.

The orc actor aimed the knife at a rock. Then the screen changed and illuminated the giant rock that actually existed on the Arnin Plains.

[A warrior doesn’t attack unarmed people.]

–It was this.

For a moment, it shone. ‘Ohhh’. The sound of an audience cheering was produced as an audio effect.

–This is all true.

It changed to an interview screen. All of the users had mosaics on

their faces, but they all praised the orc.

-He is reliable. Really.

-I can't even count the number of times my life was saved because of him. A truly great person.

-The name? Um, he can't talk.

-I don't know how it happened. But this much is clear. We were mistaken about orcs.

-He is...

-Genuine...

-Genuine...

-A true...

The interviewers all finished simultaneously.

-A warrior.

The screen was switched. Giuseppe followed the orc.

–Orc! Orc!

–.....

The orc seemed annoyed as Giuseppe followed him. In the end, the [Surprise! What happened in Elder Lord?] production team couldn't get an interview with him. Giuseppe was forced to finish the program in front of the rock carved by the orc.

–Unfortunately, I was unable to interview him. It is a shame, but the sentence that he left behind tells us who he is on its own.

The sentence shone again on the screen.

‘A warrior doesn't attack unarmed people.’

Many things were implied with the sentence.

–Although he is a NPC, it seems that we have a lot to learn from him. Especially at this time, when many ethical problems are being raised about Elder Lord. I hope you have enjoyed this wonderful, delightful and warm Elder Lord life. This was Giuseppe, a reporter from [Surprise! What happened in Elder Lord?].

She waved her hand. At the same time, the camera rose into the sky and captured both her and the rock. It continued to climb up until the rock looked like a toy, capturing the image of the plains and the blue sky of Elder Lord.

The narrator finished.

–The nameless orc. I hope his life as a great warrior will last for a long time.

The broadcast closed with this voice and some music. The program ended.

The restaurant's customers rose from their seats.

“That was amazing. Was that really an orc?”

“Really. Aren't there many witnesses on the Internet? It is more interesting to see it directly.”

“The orc is great.”

“Are you doing anything now?”

“Where did he go? People will come and watch.”

“Hey, do you want to try becoming an orc?”

“Yes.”

The university students left the restaurant. When they talked about the program they just saw, all of them usually asked one question.

“That orc, what is he doing now?”

“.....”

Elwina, the elf guard at Arnin’s gate, looked at the orc in front of her in surprise.

This was the first time that someone had raised their reputation so quickly. It usually took a month of focused hunting.

In addition, his pass wasn’t just a permit. It was an honorary citizenship granted by the Arnin Plains administrator. It was an honourable title only given to those who did great achievements in Arnin. He would be treated as a citizen of Arnin.

Elwina’s heart started pounding. The orc had really solved the task he was given. He was much more wonderful than she had thought.

“I-Incredible. I’m not surprised so don’t be mistaken.”

Elwina tried to say calmly. The orc didn’t answer.

“What, are you ignoring people now?”

“.....”

“Why do you keep...ah.”

The orc was pointing at his mouth.

Elwina blushed. “Ah, that’s right. I had forgotten. When I think back, I think I used too much strength. I didn’t know it would still last. Well, I’m sorry.”

She dismissed the magic. Silence was disabled.

“So now...”

“Hey, elf with no manners.”

“W-What?”

“Because of you...!”

She looked at Crockta with a hurt expression. Crockta looked at the beautiful elf and changed his next words.

“...So pretty.”

“Oh my god.”

“Well then, I’ll see you later. No offense, pretty elf guard.”

The Crockta confidently headed through the gates. Elwina stared blankly at his back. She felt a strange feeling.

Then someone spoke to her. “Young Lady.”

“...Don’t call me that. I am now a guard.”

“The mayor is calling.”

“Mother?”

Elwina was confused.

“She said to stop being a guard.”

“Please tell her that I will do as I want.”

“If Young Lady doesn’t return home right now, then she will sell all of your collection...”

“I understand. I will go back.”

Elwina sighed.

Chapter 34 – Contrast (1)

Crockta wasn't impressed as he finally entered the elven city of Arnin.

Of course, everything was well organized. The scale of the buildings was enormous, and the beautiful elves smelling the leaves of the trees looked like the gods from Greek mythology. But it wasn't any more grandiose than Orcrox Fortress. Apart from the elves' buildings being whiter with their aesthetic tastes, the level of construction in the city was similar to that in Orcrox.

So he wasn't impressed like the elf guiding him expected.

“It has been a long time since I've seen an orc. How about it, isn't our city beautiful compared to what you are used to?”

Crockta nodded slightly.

“Look, this building is in the latest Bellitran style. It is an architectural style developed by the elf architect, Bellitran. It was a revolution. There was an uproar in the capital. To emphasize the depths...”

“Where is Ilya?”

Crockta interrupted. The elf pouted with dissatisfaction.

“Don’t be in a hurry. Once you learn more about Arnin...”

“I didn’t come here to play.”

Crockta looked around. There were only two species in Arnin, humans and elves. They were mostly elves, and occasionally humans could be seen. But most users were humans. In his eyes, they all seemed suspicious, like they were members of the Thawing Balhae Clan.

“Oh, you are urgent. Too urgent. I know why you came here, but you shouldn’t live like that.”

“.....”

“Okay. Follow me.”

The elf raised a hand to Crockta’s shoulder. He turned away from the residential area of Arnin where they were walking into an alley between two buildings. The elf increased his pace. Arnin was filled with greenery, so it wasn’t hard to keep up with his movements. He jumped between trees like a monkey and led Crockta to a hidden place in the city.

Soon, an entire forest was revealed. There was a lush forest inside the city. As the elf ran through the forest, his form temporarily couldn’t be seen. Crockta sped up as he headed in the direction that the elf had disappeared.

It was a while before Crockta caught up with him again. The elf was sitting at a round wooden table in the middle of the forest.

“This place?”

“I have fond childhood memories here. It is also a safe place.”

The elf grinned.

“I am Ilya.”

“I guessed so.”

“Is that so? Huhu. I was surprised when Derek suddenly said he would help me... It is even more surprising that the person sent is an orc.”

He waved his hand. The magic power swayed and a few leaves fell into his hands. He arranged them on top of the table. “Our objective is the same, so let’s join hands.”

“Please explain in detail.”

“You want to get rid of the group of cursed people called Thawing Balhae. I want to get rid of the corrupt people who colluded with Thawing Balhae and establish a clean order in Arnin.”

“Corrupt?”

“Who is the corrupt person?”

Ilya placed three leaves on the round table and picked up one of them. It had a hole in it from where a worm had bitten through. Ilya raised it to his eyes. His blue eyes were visible through the hole.

“Arnin’s mayor, Elsanad.”

Crockta nodded. He recalled Derek’s voice.

‘I have planned a few investments on the premise that you are successful in your revenge.’

Derek was betting on the collapse of the Arnin mayor. Crockta looked into Ilya’s eyes. Derek was absolutely not a good person. It was hard to believe in Ilya if he had a good relationship with Derek.

Ilya shrugged.

“All you have to do is hit the Thawing Balhae Clan with me. I will take care of the rest, so don’t worry.”

“...Um.”

But Crockta wasn't a good person either. His goal was a bloody revenge. Therefore, he would join hands with Ilya for the collapse of a common enemy.

"I understand."

"It sounds like you have decided to do it together with me, so let me explain in more detail."

Ilya placed a hand on the round table. Suddenly, the wind blew away the leaves.

"In the past, Mayor Elsanad and I were friends. She was a dear friend of mine."

His eyes became distant as he recalled the past.

"We once wanted to make Arnin a happy place for everyone. We were young. I helped her to become the mayor. However, she gradually changed. After getting the taste of power, she changed. Now she isn't the Elsanad that I knew anymore."

"Is this related to the Thawing Balhae Clan?"

"Of course. She is conspiring with those cursed by the stars called Thawing Balhae...they started elf trafficking and the reconstruction of the city."

“.....”

“The people you want to kill are the dogs of Mayor Elsanad, the ones enjoying profit from her. Here, let me show you.”

Ilya beckoned to the air. Then two elves walked out from among the bushes. Crockta wasn't surprised since he had noticed them. Ilya introduced them, “They are my friends.”

“It is nice to meet you.”

“Nice to meet you.”

They greeted Crockta. They felt something unusual in the orc's eyes. Crockta greeted them.

“Are you alive? I am the orc Crockta.”

Ilya explained Crockta's words. “This is an orc greeting.”

The two elves moved. The group left the forest where the round table was located, heading in the opposite direction from the way Crockta entered.

Crockta frowned as he saw the landscape outside of the forest. It was far from the glamorous Arnin that he saw earlier. There were crumbling buildings and houses that were just barely keeping their shape. These were the streets of the poor. It was like looking at the

back alleys of Anail.

“I showed you Arnin’s sunny spot earlier, while this is Arnin’s shade. Nobody cares about this place.”

Suddenly, there was a disturbance. Ilya placed his finger to his lips in a ‘shh’ gesture. They approached the place through some shade.

“.....!”

Crockta’s eyes widened.

A group of humans were kidnapping an elf in front of an old house. The elf’s mouth was covered with a towel and her body restrained so that she couldn’t move. The captured elf was twisting her body to resist, but she couldn’t go against the strength of many. A kidnapping was taking place in broad daylight.

“Damn!”

Crockta tried to run out. However, Ilya grabbed Crockta. His body was greatly shaking. Ilya looked startled as he saw Crockta’s arm trembling.

“Calm down.”

“Look at that...!”

“I know where they are going.”

“.....!”

“They are the small fries. Taking care of them will just make their leaders more vigilant. We must wipe them all out.”

The kidnappers disappeared with the elf. Crockta took deep breaths to try and calm his anger.

“You have a strong sense of justice. I’m really surprised.”

“.....”

Ilya said, “Hang in there. I also want to save her right now. But numerous other women, children, and men have disappeared this way. We have to save them as well.”

“Doesn’t Arnin have security forces or guards?”

“They do, but they don’t come here. It is an abandoned area.”

“.....”

“One or two people will disappear and the empty houses will become a rich elven villa.”

He pointed to a distant place. New buildings were going up in that area. Elves and humans alike were sweating as they built a mansion. It was strange comparing the large building to the old and ruined houses.

Crockta asked,

“What about the kidnapped people?”

“There are only a few options. Sold into slavery, selling their bodies, or worse.”

Ilya placed an arm over Crockta’s shoulder.

“I also feel the emotions that you are currently feeling.”

They looked around the slums for a while before entering the center of Arnin through the forest. It was a stunning city compared to the streets that he had just seen. Elves were smiling as they walked the streets, looking like they were from photographs of famous brands.

But it no longer looked beautiful to Crockta.

“I’ll introduce you to the inn where you will be staying for the time being.”

“When will the plan begin?”

“Tomorrow, or maybe as early as tonight.”

Crockta nodded.

“I know that orc warriors are tough, but there are many enemies. Be well prepared.”

Ilya guided Crockta to his accommodations. It was a small inn located on the corner of the main street. The owner was an old friend of Ilya's. He was surprised to see an orc but nodded at Ilya's description. Then he welcomed Crockta.

“It is the first time I will have an orc guest, hahahat! You are really big and strong. Elves aren't like this. Kuhuhuhut!”

Despite being an elf, the owner had rugged muscles. There were a few muscular people among the elves.

“Yes, aren't you a little bit heavy? What is your weight? Is it three times mine? Hahat!”

“.....”

“Next time, you should exercise with me. Hahat!”

Ilya paid for the inn.

Crockta put down his luggage, left the inn, and looked around Arnin. The rare appearance of an orc drew the attention of the elves. Crockta ignored their gazes and reached the fountain in the center of the main street.

“Can I ask you one thing?”

He talked to a young man sitting idly at the fountain. He was a human and he seemed to be thinking as he stared into the air. Then he looked startled as Crockta appeared.

“Wow, an orc! How surprising. What did you want to know?”

“What is Mayor Elsanad like?”

“Elsanad? She is an excellent mayor. She has made Arnin prosperous.”

“Is that so?”

“I hope she will be elected again. There is an upcoming election. I will vote as a citizen of Arnin.”

Crockta nodded.

“So she has no problems?”

“Problem... I heard that she’s worried that her daughter isn’t listening to her. Why? Do you want citizenship here?”

“Something similar.”

“Haha, Arnin is a livable city. Welcome.”

“I will think about it. By the way, what were you thinking about so intently just now?”

“Ah...in fact...” The young man struggled to open his mouth. “The person I love...how to... I want to confess...what do you think about expressing my heart publicly? Would you be impressed?”

“.....”

“I’m going to do a surprise event after calling her. I’ll make a heart with candles and serenade her, singing publicly in front of many people....”

Crockta shook his head. “Get rid of that.”

“...Huh?”

“Listen to my words.”

“T-Then...”

“Rather than a spectacular event, your sincerity will work better.”

“...Ah...”

“It is better to confess your heart when the both of you are alone.”

Like this, he saved the life of the young man. Crockta finished the conversation and got up from his spot.

Something had been irritating him from the beginning. Crockta turned his head. There was an elf looking at him from the middle of a crowd. He smiled as he noticed Crockta’s gaze. Crockta approached him.

It was Ilya.

“Are you following me?”

“Yes, something like that. Please understand. Derek sent you, but I can’t trust you straight away.”

He cleared his throat and placed an arm around Crockta’s shoulder. Then he lowered his voice. “I heard your conversation

with that young man.”

“.....”

“Just like that young man, Arnin’s citizens are being deceived. Everybody thinks she is a good person. The truth is...what we saw. The awful truth.”

Crockta and Ilya moved with their shoulders close to each other. As Crockta walked a little bit, he saw Ilya’s colleagues. They whispered something to Ilya.

“The date is decided. Tonight, we will move.”

“.....”

“I will stop by the inn at midnight. I’ll see you then. Please be prepared.”

Crockta nodded. Ilya licked his lips before saying something else. “Right now, your anger at their misdeeds is vivid. I have been waiting for someone with a strong sense of justice like you to come.”

He grinned. “Arnin needs people like you. Welcome. Then...”

He disappeared into the crowd with his group.

Crockta considered his words. A sense of justice. It didn't fit at all. He was angry at the scene, but that didn't mean that it was due to a sense of justice. Crockta looked in the direction that Ilya had disappeared in for a while. His eyes blazed.

He just had common sense.

Chapter 35 – Contrast (2)

The moon could be seen through the window.

Crockta wore his greatsword on his back, walking past the crowded pub on the inn's first floor and heading outside. The cool night air woke up his senses.

“You're early.”

Ilya and his companions were waiting. They wore masks covering their faces. Only their eyes shone in the darkness.

“Quickly. The sooner the better.”

Arnin was quiet at night. Except for some pubs that opened until dawn, they all turned off their lights.

They moved quickly, rushing through the forest. They soon reached the slums that they had visited during the day. It was a street covered in darkness. As they stood there, it seemed like darkness was the only thing they could see.

The slums were darker than the other areas of Arnin, all black without a single house lit up. Only the faint traces of moonlight filtered through the air without reaching the ground. Ilya whispered and created a faint, feeble fire that only revealed the immediate surroundings. Ilya gestured, as if to follow him.

Ilya arrived at a broken down building in a corner of the slums and released the fire. He took a deep breath and approached. As they listened, a faint sound was heard from inside the building.

.....

Ilya raised a finger to his mouth. Quiet. They killed any noise and stepped closer. The dialogue leaked through.

“If this is successful, then won’t it be the second largest one?”

“Exactly.”

“There are many old men standing in line for elves.”

“Some of them have low assimilation rates...”

Assimilation rate. They were words that indicated that these were users. Crockta quietly raised a hand to the doorknob. It wasn’t locked. They exchanged glances.

Ilya gathered both hands together and muttered. Moisture was drawn from the air and became a sphere of water. Ilya summoned two in the air and then whispered.

“Enter quietly.”

Crockta and the elves nodded.

Ilya gave a signal. The water spheres flew through the air. Crockta quickly opened the door and plunged in.

The two humans sitting at the table were shocked by the sudden intrusion, but they had to cover their heads as the water spheres hit them. They were trapped in the water sphere and couldn't breathe properly.

One of them was stabbed in the abdomen. The elves handled the other one. Both became unconscious and fell to the ground. Crockta tied up the users with the prepared rope and gagged them. The members of the Thawing Balhae Clan were thrown into a corner after being suppressed in an instant.

“Underground.”

Ilya started searching the floor. His hand grabbed something and lifted it up. There were stairs to the basement. Light was coming from the bottom. Faint words could be heard.

“There will be more down there.”

Then Ilya looked at the elves.

“As Crockta wants, overpower instead of killing those cursed by the stars.”

“Yes.”

“Let’s go.”

The elves entered. Crockta followed. As they went down, a somewhat remodeled basement appeared. They slowly advanced. There was a tunnel that was like a mine shaft. At first, it looked rushed, but then an orderly structure started to appear. There was a bend in the path.

A sound was heard. Crockta stopped in his tracks.

“.....?”

Ilya tried to ask. However, a scream rang out. They looked at each other for a moment. Then they all ran forward at the same time. They doubted their eyes as they went beyond the bend.

A horrifying sight.

Two humans were raping a female elf. They repeatedly punched and kicked her when she resisted, as if they had no interest in the woman’s life. The woman lying underneath the men already had bruises and scars all over her body.

Another human was sitting at the table and giggling like it was funny. Behind him, a prison with steel bars were visible and

countless elves were confined like dogs inside. It looked like hell.

The empty eyes of the female elf was like a doll as she turned her head towards Crockta. At that moment, her eyes seemed to shake.

Crockta angrily pulled out his greatsword. His sword shone in the light. The humans turned as they noticed the presence of an intruder.

“W-What?”

Crockta rushed in. Ilya and his elves followed.

First, he attacked the man raping the elf. The body of a man flew back from Crockta’s attack and hit the steel bars. A few of the trapped elves looked up at the frenzy.

Crockta stabbed the stomach of the other human, controlling his strength so that the man wouldn’t die. He forced the opponent’s legs off balance with his greatsword. The moment he was about to turn his blade towards the other person,

A spherical fireball flew at him.

“.....!”

Crockta hurriedly lifted his greatsword. However, before it hit him, the fireball slammed into an invisible barrier and

disappeared. Crockta turned to see the smiling Ilya.

“Please be careful.”

“Thank you.”

Crockta expressed his gratitude and slammed his knee into the human’s face. The human’s teeth flew through the air.

Ilya’s colleagues were also proficient in battle. The Thawing Balhae Clan members resisted with intense aggression and the fighting became longer. It was some time after the launch of Elder Lord, so the users had developed.

However, the situation changed when Crockta exerted his power. A limb flew into the air every time Crockta’s greatsword moved. The lost limbs wriggled on the floor.

“Kuk...this...”

“How did you know...kuk...”

Crockta kicked their mouths. It cracked together and broke. Then they were tied up and gagged. The Thawing Balhae members realized what was happening. They were shocked and struggled fiercely, but they couldn’t stop Crockta. His burly hands tied up the struggling users in turn.

In the end, all of the Thawing Balhae members here were overpowered.

Ilya recovered his breathing and looked at Crockta.

“The work isn’t over yet.”

He found a bunch of keys and handed it over to his colleagues. The prison doors opened and the elves were released.

“There are a few more places like this.”

Crockta nodded.

The night wasn’t over yet.

They raided several more bases through the night. Gradually, the level of the Thawing Balhae Clan members increased. Some people in Ilya’s group were injured. Crockta was almost hit by a blow but managed to escape.

So far, they had saved dozens of elves.

“This is the last one.”

They walked towards the house. It was bigger than the previous places they visited.

All of them were in a mess due to the lasting battle. Thawing Balhae's response was stronger because they already communicated with each other. This was the last one and the enemies would be ready.

As expected, powerful magic hit them as soon as they entered the house.

“Ugh!”

The shield spell that Ilya had prepared blocked the magic. However, the shock was conveyed, causing Ilya to turn pale. He would be queasy for a bit.

“It is a very well made game. NPCs can cause such unexpected events.”

One man walked out.

Crockta's face stiffened. He had seen that face somewhere. It was the man standing next to the magician of the Thawing Balhae clan at Lenox's last battle. But he didn't seem to recognize Crockta. He looked at Crockta and Ilya's companions before lifting his spear.

“I will get the orc.”

“.....”

“Your activities...ends here.”

He pointed his spear at Crockta. The other clan members also raised the weapons, ready to rush forward at any time. The enemies were numerically superior, but the personal skills of Crockta and Ilya's group were outstanding. If the battle lasted too long, then reinforcements might come.

It needed to be lightning quick.

The two sides collided. Crockta's greatsword hit the man's spear. The man maintained his distance and stabbed the spear at Crockta. Crockta evaded, but the speed was faster than he expected, causing him to be hit in the thigh.

“Keuk!”

The cut wasn't deep. The pain caused his movements to become uncomfortable. Crockta wiped his thigh and grasped his greatsword.

The man grinned. “Orc... It would be difficult if I had a low level, but not anymore. Not anymore.”

He stepped back and forth. He was holding a spear, but his

movements were reminiscent of boxing. Crockta moved forward and wielded his greatsword. The man quickly retreated, and then his spear aimed for the gap in Crockta's movements. The target was Crockta's shoulders.

“Take this, bastard orc!”

But Crockta's shoulder twisted flexibly as he avoided the stab. Then he grabbed the spear with his arm and pulled. The man tried to hold on, but he couldn't overcome Crockta's muscular strength. Crockta spun his body.

His body was swung around Crockta and then slammed into the ground.

“Kuhak!”

It was a clean move. Crockta tried to stab the man with the greatsword, but another clan member attacked him. Unfortunately, Crockta was forced to back off..

He looked around and saw that all of the other elves were on the defensive. It was a tiring battle and it wasn't easy due to the difference in numbers.

“Hu. More than I thought...” Ilya muttered. The eyes above the mask frowned. “I am going to have to use some strength. Protect me.”

The elves gathered around Ilya. There was a powerful wave of magic power. The gazes of man who got up with the support of a clan member turned towards Ilya. He felt something suspicious and aimed his spear towards Ilya.

Crockta blocked him. The man looked at Crockta and twisted his lips like he was annoyed.

“You asshole...”

He raised his spear.

“Everyone attack him!”

He pointed towards Ilya. The Thawing Balhae members charged towards Ilya. The elves thwarted them. While the clan members and elves fought, Ilya’s spell was being completed. The chant was in its final stages. Something started to emerge over Ilya’s head.

“...Fuck!”

The man confronting Crockta threw his spear at this moment. It was a powerful throw. Crockta hurriedly tried to stop it with his greatsword, but he was too late. It aimed straight towards Ilya. Ilya had his eyes closed, so he didn’t know about the spear.

Crockta didn’t even have time to yell. The spear passed by Ilya.

“.....!”

The chant stopped.

“Huu...” Ilya wiped the sweat off his forehead. The spear aimed at Ilya had narrowly passed him and struck the wall, leaving a long scar on Ilya’s cheek. At the same time, his mask was torn. Ilya’s face was revealed.

“I almost died.”

Ilya laughed as he wiped at the wound on his cheek. The chant had been completed. Something unknown was waving its tail above his head.

It had the appearance of a long snake made of water. It seemed to be a dragon at first sight. Then it spread its wings and opened its mouth. Cold air emerged and lowered the surrounding temperature. It was an elemental summoned by Ilya.

The Thawing Balhae members fell back.

Crockta’s eyes headed back to the enemy. The man who threw the spear was now weaponless. He was scheduled to receive ‘concrete’. But his expression was strange.

“You...”

He was staring at Ilya, not Crockta. But Ilya shouted before he could speak.

“Undine! Attack!”

The summoned dragon penetrated the man’s body. He screamed in pain and fell to the ground.

“.....!”

His body changed into white particles. He was dead. Crockta stared at Ilya.

“Right now, we are in a hurry. There is no time to capture everyone since reinforcements are coming. I know your situation, but please understand.”

“...I understand.”

Crockta nodded. The fight began again. After Ilya summoned Undine, the battle turned to their advantage. The Clan members were either killed or captured. All of the Thawing Balhae members in this city had been swept away.

The group explored the interior of the house and found more victims. The rescued elves thanked Ilya and Crockta. But Ilya seemed to be searching for something else.

“It is really here.”

After going through the house for a while, Ilya emerged with something. It was a thick book.

“It is a book.”

Ilya quickly confirmed the contents. The letters inside the book made it look like a ledger. A smile flashed on his face.

“This is a record of all the dirty dealings between them and Elsanad.”

Chapter 36 – Contrast (3)

“I know why you are so obsessed with being a guard,” Elsanad spoke.

She was checking the shape of her earrings in the mirror. When she touched it with her fingers, the transparent earrings moved and scattered light at various angles. Elsanad was satisfied with the brilliance and quietly laughed.

The reflection in the mirror showed Elwina’s sour expression.

“But how long can you keep it up?”

“I will do it for as long as I want.”

“There is good in the world Elwina, as well as poison.”

Elsanad rose from her seat.

She spent most of her day working as the highly respected mayor of Arnin. The only personal time she had to herself was when she prepared her appearance before going to the city hall in the morning. As an elf, she was sensitive about her appearance and painstakingly managed it.

Elwina, who inherited her blood, was no different from her. Fortunately, both of them had prominent beauty among elves, and

were never dissatisfied because of their appearance. However, unique hobbies would form due to their high sense of aesthetics.

In Elwina's case, it was dolls.

“There won't be much room for your collections anymore.”

She made the dolls directly. There was only one of them in the world so she appreciated their unique charms.

“I'm tired of pretty elves. I need new materials.”

As a guard, she was able to see many groups of people travelling to Arnin. The strangers and members of other species gave her a type of inspiration different from the elves.

“It is awkward because you've only loved elves. Then are you planning on making an orc doll?”

“.....”

Elwina didn't answer, so Elsanad turned towards her. Her daughter had a confused expression on her face. Elsanad burst out laughing.

“Elwina, I'm glad that you are forsaking the prejudice against other species, but I am worried about your blush all of a sudden. Did you meet an orc?”

“That’s right.”

“It has been a really long time since an orc has entered Arnin. Maybe it is a good thing for Arnin.”

Elsanad rose from her seat. In her elegant dress, beautiful earrings, and necklace, she looked like a goddess from a piece of artwork. Elsanad’s secretary, who was watching them talk, opened the door.

“Mayor, it is time to go.”

“I understand.”

Just before she left the room, she looked at her adorable daughter Elwina. “Daughter. I know I have been negligent towards you since your childhood. I have always felt sorry about that.”

“It’s nothing.”

“Come here.”

Elsanad stretched out her hands and hugged Elwina, patting her on the back. Elwina looked at the secretary like she was embarrassed by the sudden embrace, but she soon hugged her mother back.

“I am your mother, but I am also the mother of all of the citizens in Arnin.

“I’m aware of that. You don’t have to worry. You’ve always said that since I was a child.”

“I appreciate your understanding. If you can live in a happier and more beautiful Arnin, isn’t it worth it?”

Elsanad released Elwina from her arms.

“Most of the plans that I first thought about are currently ongoing. Once I am mayor again after the election, I will do what I can for Arnin.”

“Yes...”

“At that time, I want to retire and spend more time with you.”

Elwina nodded.

“Next time, show me your dolls again. They are beautiful.”

“...Yes.”

Elwina smiled. Elsanad touched her daughter’s cheeks. She was a stubborn daughter, but she looked like an angel when she smiled.

She was reminded of her dead husband.

“Then, I’ll be going.”

“Goodbye.”

Elsanad kissed her daughter on the cheek and left the room. Her secretary followed. As soon as they left home, she turned to business straight away. “How are they? Is it going well in the slums?”

“Of course.”

“I’m glad. It is my long-cherished wish, so I am sorry that I felt any doubts.”

They entered a carriage. As the carriage moved through Arnin, citizens waved and greeted their mayor. Elsanad smiled at the citizens through the window.

“Everybody is happy, I think.”

“It is all thanks to you.”

“The old Arnin wasn’t beautiful. It made me sick.”

Elsanad’s secretary, Alsein shrugged.

He was firmly dedicated to his boss, Elsanad. However, her passion and enthusiasm was solely based on her own strict standards of beauty. This often led to gaps between ideals and reality. It was his role to point this out.

“The citizens of the slums will also smile like that,” Elsanad said.

“They will.”

“Huhuhut.”

“Just...”

“Just?”

“The cost of the new buildings seems to be excessive. Don’t just try to make it pretty when building. I know that you are sensitive to beauty, but you have to compromise. In particular, the statue of benevolence in the slums is a bit...”

“...Isn’t it okay?”

“It won’t work. It is a waste of money.”

“...Really?”

“Yes. I strongly oppose it.”

Elsanad’s ears dropped. Alsein’s heart weakened, but he didn’t give in as he declared, “It is nonsense.”

“I understand. I will take care of it.”

“Thank you.”

Elsanad wanted to build a statue of the Goddess of Mercy in the slums. It would look good, but the cost was a problem. She was crestfallen, but Alsein pretended not to know. She looked out the window and suddenly laughed.

“Alsein, look. A sheep cloud.”

Alsein’s gaze moved. A cloud in the sky was shaped like a sheep. It was a rare and beautiful sight. Elsanad’s eyes lit up like a girl who liked pretty things.

“Pretty.”

Elsanad grabbed Alsein’s shoulder and enjoyed it. Alsein also smiled.

Crockta wiped out the Thawing Balhae Clan, which had been committing evils in Arnin. Most of the clan members were rendered unable to play the game, and Ian got some revenge for Lenox. But the Thawing Balhae Clan wasn't based only in Arnin.

Arnin was just the beginning. He still had to clear them from a few other cities. However, Derek's contract still remained. Crockta's work in Arnin wasn't over yet. These were the conditions.

Kill Elsanad, or help Ilya win the election and become mayor.

According to the contract, he could kill those who took part in the crime. Derek's goal was to make his business partner, Ilya, hold the reins of power in Arnin. If Mayor Elsanad was killed, and if her wicked deeds were publicized, things would become easier.

But Crockta decided to watch some more. It was sufficient if Ilya was elected mayor.

Ilya was questionable.

There were many suspicious and unknown things about him. No matter how long he had been preparing, he knew all of the information about the Thawing Balhae Clan and guided Crockta through their secret passages. Most of all, the man who seemed to be the leader of the Thawing Balhae clan in Arnin was surprised when he saw Ilya's face.

Then Ilya had blocked the man's mouth by killing him.

Crockta, Jung Ian, had gone through all types of things as a soldier. He wasn't always on the right side. He often saw those involved in power cover the truth with deception and move people according to their will.

To him, his task here was over so he was just playing around now. Thus, he didn't intervene anymore and just watched Ilya.

“Arnin's citizens! I have something I must tell you. It is the truth. The dirty and ugly truth.”

Ilya stood in the square and shouted at people.

It was Arnin's election season. Support for Elsanad was overwhelming, so the vote was close to a formality. They would run the competition, but the winner would always be Elsanad.

But this time might be different.

“What type of person is Elsanad? A clean person? A mayor who makes sacrifices for Arnin? If so, you have been tricked. She isn't such a person.”

Ilya shouted. His words, enhanced through magic, rang out through the square. The citizens passing by stopped. It was irritating to hear such things about their beautiful mayor. The citizens were interested in what Ilya was saying.

“As you all know, not every place in Arnin is beautiful. There are slums. You don’t want to see it or admit it, but Arnin doesn’t just consist of rich elves like you. There are the poor and persecuted. And Elsanad!”

He spoke about how Elsanad joined with those cursed by the stars, trafficking and enslaving elves through them.

The citizens didn’t believe it. To them, Elsanad absolutely wasn’t such a person.

But Ilya held the clear evidence high in the air.

“Take a look at this book! All of their transactions with Elsanad have been recorded here!”

Ilya opened the book and thrust it before the eyes of the spectators. It agitated the crowd. Ilya didn’t stop. His powerful voice resonated in the square. People started to believe his words.

Ilya’s fellow elves among the crowd led the response.

Crockta watched silently and turned away. Ilya was suspicious, but Crockta had no evidence. Whether it was true or false wasn’t his problem. Crockta just wanted revenge for Lenox. It wasn’t the same as justice. It was up to them to do their share.

At that moment...

There was a disturbance in a corner of the square. Mayor Elsanad's carriage had appeared. City Hall was just across the square so Elsanad was confronted with Ilya as she arrived at work. The citizens had interested expressions on their faces.

Elsanad didn't know what was happening and just wanted to pass through the square. But Ilya blocked her horse-drawn carriage. The driver asked him to move aside but Ilya was adamant.

"Elsanad! Reveal the truth! You can't fool us anymore!"

The driver spoke inside the carriage. Then the carriage door opened and Elsanad stuck her head out. The citizens shouted as her beautiful face was exposed.

"...Ilya?"

Elsanad's eyes widened. Ilya's expression didn't change as he approached her and shouted,

"Elsanad! All of your crimes are recorded here! Are you pretending not to know? You are a corrupt mayor who sold the elves to those who are cursed for the sake of your own self-interest!"

"Ilya, this..."

At that time, Alsein spoke to the driver of the carriage. He had a sense of what Ilya was trying to do. “Move around that person. Leave now.”

“Alsein?”

“Let’s go. Mayor, please ignore this. That person is trying to incite the citizens. You don’t need to deal with it.”

“But...”

“There is no need to move as he desires. Just go. Leave now.”

The driver moved the horses. The carriage redirected and moved around Ilya to leave the square. Ilya looked back and shouted louder.

“Look at this! Elsanad is avoiding the truth and running away.”

The crowd murmured. A smile appeared on Ilya’s face. He once again raised his voice.

“Let’s find out the truth about Elsanad, who has lied to the citizens!”

Chapter 37 – Truth (1)

Crocka snuck through the slums to search for the remaining members of the Thawing Balhae Clan, but none remained. There were no noticeable users in the vicinity. It seems like they had withdrawn from Arnin.

The elves living in the slums were at work, so it was quiet. Only the voices of the workmen building in the slums were occasionally heard. Were they doing something wrong?

Crockta wandered for a while before suddenly stopping in front of the construction site.

“.....!”

Crockta’s eyes widened. It was due to the appearance of the sweaty workers holding the construction tools.

“Hey! Move carefully! Don’t get hurt!”

“Whew, why am I doing this in a game?”

“That’s what I said.”

A white star was shining on the foreheads of the workers. Crockta examined each one of their faces. There were NPCs, but the majority of them were users. They were wearing protective

gear and using construction place jargon like they were actual builders.

“Hey, Orc!”

A man sitting on the floor and drinking water waved at Crockta. He also had a white star on his forehead.

“This is the first time I’ve seen an orc in Arnin! If you want to build a house then tell me! We can make it for cheap!”

Crockta looked at the entrance of the construction site. The sign, ‘Kangaroo Construction’ was hung there. Below was an advertisement for prompt construction at low prices. Crockta asked,

“Are you people cursed by the stars?”

“Eh? How do you know?” The man was confused. “Well, we are cursed but...does it matter? We are cursed, but we build for a cheap price, and we do it quickly. So if you have some land, tell me. We will build it nicely. Hahaha!”

They were users who enjoyed the architectural field in Elder Lord. Their deft movements indicated that they were people who actually worked in the construction industry. There was a brief overview of the construction posted at the entrance of the construction site.

[Name of Project: New construction of the 'Benevolence Medical Aid'

Client: Arnin City

Contractor: Kangaroo Construction

Building Usage: Public medical and support for the underprivileged facility.]

Crockta scrutinized it carefully and the man shrugged.

“Do you need a job? An orc should have enough strength so do you want to try it?”

“No. Do you know the Thawing Balhae Clan?”

“Thawing Balhae? I know.” The man nodded. “They connected us to the mayor here. They are quite dishonorable, but we didn’t have a choice. Do you know them?”

“I don’t know.”

“I see. Be careful not to tangle with them. It seems like they are doing bad things to amuse themselves. NPCs, no, they don’t like orcs. Haha.”

The overseer called out to the man. He got up from his seat.

“I’m going, I’m going! So Brother, stop wagging your tongue!”

The man ran back and continued working on the construction. Crockta looked after him thoughtfully. Ilya had said that this building would become a villa for the rich elves, but that wasn’t it. It was a medical facility for the poor. His mind became complicated.

Ilya.

His face popped into Crockta’s head. He seemed friendly, but his real intentions were unknown. The surprised Thawing Balhae member seemed to know Ilya. He was killed by Ilya before he could open his mouth.

Ilya made a deal with Derek. Derek wasn’t a good man. Rather, it was the opposite. Derek and Crockta just joined hands to use each other. Crockta absolutely didn’t trust Derek.

Was he being deceived?

Crockta sighed. His purpose was revenge on the Thawing Balhae Clan. It wasn’t necessary to worry about other things. Whether he was being used or not, it was sufficient if he wiped out the Thawing Balhae Clan.

Therefore, he tried to turn away. But something kept nagging at him, making his heart uncomfortable. He stood still to think about it. Crockta closed his eyes and looked into his heart.

Ah. Crockta opened his eyes.

It was him. He was there. He was watching Crockta from the bottom of his heart.

“I understand Lenox.”

Crockta touched his chest. The scar created by Lenox’s axe would be there forever, along with the laws of a warrior that he preached. Before he left Arnin, he needed to know the truth about what was happening in this city. It wasn’t too late to decide how to act after confirming the truth.

Crockta moved again.

Enyanis, the plains administrator, looked between the two people who came to visit him with a difficult expression.

“What are you...”

One of them was the orc warrior Crockta, whom Enyanis had directly granted an honorary citizenship. The other person was his

friend, Secretary Alsein, who was Elsanad's shadow.

“Crockta, sit down. Alsein, what are you doing here?”

Enyanis served tea. The three of them were facing each other in the drawing room. Crockta didn't know who Alsein was and got straight to the point.

“Enyanis, I have a question.”

Enyanis nodded. It was the first time hearing the orc's voice. After becoming an honorary citizen, Enyanis learned that Crockta had been unable to speak due to Silence magic.

“What is Elsanad like as a mayor?”

Then Alsein looked at Crockta. Why was an orc asking about the mayor of this city?

Enyanis burst out laughing. “It is funny that you are asking me this when this friend is right in front of you. Maybe it is because of the disturbance that happened yesterday...”

Enyanis pointed to Alsein. “He is the mayor's secretary.”

Crockta looked at Alsein. Alsein greeted him lightly.

Enyanis said, “For the answer, I’m not saying this as his friend, but I personally think she is wonderful. Everyone’s opinion is different, but I respect Elsanad. I don’t believe Ilya’s words.”

“Do you know Ilya?”

“I know. Alsein, did you come because of Ilya?”

Alsein nodded.

“I know that he once worked with Elsanad. I heard that after Elsanad first became mayor, he caused trouble and was fired... He is probably spreading these rumors due to that.”

“That’s right, it’s absurd. The mayor selling citizens? It isn’t funny.” Alsein’s voice was ferocious. Enyanis said, “However, there are rumors that Elsanad ran away from him. The fact that she didn’t deny his claim on the spot has left the citizens shaken.”

“.....”

“You should’ve been there. Why did you do that?”

“That...”

Alsein sipped his tea. “Cough. That...she shouldn’t have to deal with such a person. There might be problems if she responds too quickly. It obviously isn’t true, but it is a betrayal for the people

who believe it.”

“Regardless, an explanation is needed. Not responding will make the rumor more pervasive.”

“I know.”

Alsein thought about it. Then he looked at Crockta. “Crockta, it is nice to meet you. You have become an honorary citizen. Enyanis told me about your excellent behavior the other day.”

“It isn’t a big deal.”

“As a citizen who works with the mayor, I can say that the mayor absolutely isn’t such a person. Of course, there are other things but... Thanks to these unusual aspects, she has done a good job. Arnin is prospering thanks to her.”

“I understand.”

“If you have any more questions, then I will answer them now. Is there anything else you are curious about?”

Crockta was troubled. “Well...how about the mayor’s daughter?”

He heard the other day that the mayor was worried about her daughter not listening to her.

Alsein's face hardened for a moment. But then a smile appeared on his face. "Hahaha. You are interested in her daughter."

"I am just curious."

"She is beautiful like the mayor. She wants to keep working as a guard...that is the worry but...there are no problems. She is just young."

"Yes."

"If you continue to watch, then you will see that everything is fictional. Anyways, welcome to Arnin. I need to return to the mayor."

Alsein rose from his seat. Enyanis said, "Are you going already?"

"I forgot that the mayor called me. I'll come back next time."

"Yes, thank you."

Alsein left this place with large strides. Crockta was deep in thought as he looked at Alsein's back. As the door to the drawing room closed, Enyanis sipped his tea and said in a quiet voice.

"Crockta."

“Yes.”

“In fact, I have something to say to you.”

“What is it...?”

Enyanis coughed. Crockta listened closely. “The Arnin Plains’ Rescue Unit, inspired by Crockta, is very responsive. The reaction is explosive. So it makes sense...”

“.....”

“Can I draw a portrait of you? I’ll also create a nice invitation for you and frame it... Hanging them side by side... Hmm hmm, it will go down in Arnin’s history. I know a great painter...”

“...That’s okay.”

“Just think about it once...”

“...It’s okay.”

“Still...”

Elsanad looked up. She was in her office. Her desk and appliances

were neatly arranged and all in harmony. The whole room looked like it was made for her. It was all Elsanad's vision.

“Alsein?”

“Mayor.”

Alsein stood in front of her.

“Didn't you get today off?” She asked.

“I have something to say to you.”

Elsanad took off the glasses that she was using to look at the documents. Her vivid green eyes stared at Alsein. “What is it?”

“There are some people who believe Ilya's words.”

“.....”

“The election is upcoming. It would be better to take care of this at once.”

Elsanad nodded. “If Alsein says so. Ilya still seems to have some complaints against me. I will personally explain it to the citizens. I'll ask Ilya about the rumors that are stirring up the citizens.”

“Yes.”

“Do you have anything else to say?”

“And...”

“And?”

“It is about Elwina.”

Elsanad cocked her head. “Elwina?”

“Yes. Hasn’t Ilya started acting? It might be dangerous for Elwina to go around like this.”

“She is careful.”

“Mayor.”

“I understand. I’ll tell her. I’ll explain it to her properly.”

“Thank you.” Alsein nodded and bowed.

“Then let’s go.”

“Huh? Where...?”

“Didn’t Alsein say it just now?” Elsanad got up from her desk and wore the coat that was hanging on the wall. The cloth was the colour of the sky, making her white skin shine. Elsanad dressed up and smiled at Alsein. The whole room seemed to light up from her beautiful smile.

“I’m going to see the citizens.”

“Now?”

“Of course.”

Elsanad passed by Alsein. “It won’t be beautiful if they keep on talking. I need to get rid of it quickly.”

“I understand.”

Alsein nodded.

Due to Elsanad’s beautiful appearance, people often thought that she was gentle or weak. But she absolutely wasn’t. Rather, it was close to the opposite.

Elsanad was strong. She had difficult standards. The things that didn’t meet those standards would be thoroughly excluded. She didn’t care about contrary opinions. She just wanted to accomplish what she desired. In that sense, she was closer to being heartless

than being gentle.

Her beautiful appearance and attitude didn't reveal her essence. It was fortunate that her dream was Arnin's prosperity.

After thinking this, Alsein spoke to Elsanad, "I'll prepare the carriage. Where are you going?"

"The square. Everyone should be there. Prepare a podium."

"I understand. I will let the citizens know."

"Please."

Elsanad, Alsein, and her attendants headed towards Arnin's central square. Crockta and Ilya were also there.

Chapter 38 – Truth (2)

Elsanad bowed to the citizens, her voice filled with sincerity.

She explained about the allegations. She wanted to increase the number of facilities in the slums, and had contracted those cursed by the stars at a cheap price in order to solve the budget problem. She admitted that there was some trouble in the meantime.

“Citizens, I have only been working for Arnin. I believe that all of the citizens here knows my heart. I didn’t think they would commit such evil things. It is my fault. I will bow down and apologize.”

They nodded.

The elves that were freed from Thawing Balhae by Ilya were touched after Elsanad’s speech. As witnesses of the crimes committed, Ilya had brought them here to testify. But Elsanad’s eloquence caused their hearts to shake.

Ilya’s face gradually stiffened, and Crockta was watching all of this.

Elsanad came down from the podium and hugged all of the victims. She promised to compensate them for the damage and tearfully emphasized with the pain they suffered. She expressed her strong will to thoroughly search for the criminals.

Crockta used a skill.

[Mind's Eye (Special) has been used.]

[The target's level is higher than the caster. It has failed.]

He used it again.

[Mind's Eye (Special) has been used.]

[The target's level is higher than the caster. It has failed.]

.....

He used it several times, but the result was the same. Crockta frowned and concentrated.

[Mind's Eye's (Special) has opened.]

[You can feel fine but sincere emotions.]

Then Ilya drew near to shout at Elsanad. Elsanad's expression as

shaken and she protested. As her emotions grew, Crockta was able to grasp a little bit of her heart through Mind's Eye.

“How do you explain this ledger? Elsanad! This is the physical evidence!”

“I don't know. The contents might have been manipulated. I would never do this.”

“There is no criminal who would admit to their sins.”

Ilya raised the book up high. “This details how much they sold the poor elves for, and how much money they gave to the mayor in return. Citizens, don't be fooled by Elsanad's slick tongue. This woman is a demon who sold her own citizens.”

The citizens started murmuring again.

Crockta used a skill.

[Mind's Eye (Special) has been used.]

[The level of the target is higher than the caster, but his frenzied emotions are emanating from him.]

[Feelings of deceit can be felt.]

Elsanad's emotions were heartfelt. Feelings of deception could be felt from Ilya. For Crockta, it was clear what the truth was.

"I couldn't save all of the elves that were sold. I can't leave this city to such a suspicious woman. Citizens! Please find out! Here is the proof!"

"Ilya, calm down. Everybody, he is spreading rumors to tarnish my honour."

"Then bring proof that this evidence is false, Elsanad!"

The citizens were once again confused. In the end, the two campaigns failed to come to a conclusion.

As Arnin's election approached, both of them were being talked about by the citizens. Those who believed in Ilya and those who believed in Elsanad hit the streets. Others believed that Elsanad wasn't guilty, but she should take responsibility for neglecting this incident.

Arnin was in a state of confusion.

Crockta went and visited Ilya.

"Ilya."

“Crockta, did something happen?”

Ilya was scratching his head while writing, like something wasn't going well. He raised his head at Crockta's appearance.

Ilya's mansion was very luxurious. He was clearly a wealthy person, and it seemed that he was funding his own political activities. It was impossible for someone with an economic crisis to plan such a thing.

“I have to ask you something.”

“What is it?”

“I'll just speak bluntly.”

Crockta closed the door. “Did you doctor that ledger?”

Ilya's expression changed. He pulled out the ledger, an old, leather-bound book, from the drawer under his desk. He opened the book, revealing the many transactions written inside.

“Manipulated... Elsanad said that.”

Ilya laughed. He stared at Crockta for a moment. Crockta looked back without any hesitation. Ilya's eyes shook. His expression was calm, but feelings of irritation and anger filled his eyes.

Ilya threw the book. It flew and landed at Crockta's feet. Then he said,

“Whether it is manipulated or not.”

Ilya pulled out another book from his drawer. It looked exactly the same as the previous book. The same contents were also written inside. Ilya chuckled and threw it at Crockta's feet.

“Does it have anything to do with you?”

“.....”

“You made a deal with Derek, just like me. You just have to do your assignment. Stop doing such useless things, Crockta.”

A few more similar books were pulled out of Ilya's desk. Ilya laughed as he looked at them. “Anyway, you came here for revenge against the Thawing Balhae Clan due to the orc called Lenox.”

Crockta's expression changed at the mention of Lenox's name.

Ilya continued, “Derek's warning for me was true. He did say that orcs were righteous. I told him I would handle it.”

“Did you deceive me?”

“It wasn’t deception, but proper cooperation. Didn’t you catch those guys, thanks to me? Can you continue to catch those cursed by the stars without me? Can you handle the tiring work while watching your own life, without my help?”

“.....”

“We each did what we needed to do, that’s it.”

Ilya got up from his seat. His beautiful face, which had always been smiling, distorted. This caused a word that didn’t suit the elves to appear in Crockta’s mind.

Ugly. His true face was ugly.

“Yes, I will tell you everything. I sold the elves together with the people from Thawing Balhae. I had a deal with them.”

“.....!”

“And I got tired of them. I had drained just enough from them. Those cursed by the stars, did they really think I would deal with them forever? Thank you for your help.” He spread his arms and laughed. “Anyway, I will become Arnin’s next mayor. That’s it. You can leave quietly.”

“Ugly.”

“Everyone is like this if you dig deeply enough. I’m just being honest.”

Ilya approached Crockta. Crockta didn’t move. The faint shape of an elemental was around Ilya’s body. The appearance of the elemental was distorted like Ilya.

“If you want to reveal anything then do so, Orc Warrior. Then I, along with Derek, won’t help you anymore. I wonder if the citizens will trust the word of an orc. Why don’t you just worry about your revenge? Otherwise it will be a waste.”

Ilya raised his hand. The door behind Crockta was opened using magic power.

“Crockta, I quite like you.”

“I don’t like you.”

“Our motivations are different, but we are similar when it comes to moving forward towards our purpose. In fact, I actually like justice. Isn’t it good? Justice and judgment. However, I don’t want them shoved towards me.”

Ilya waved his hand. “Well, bye.”

It was a command to leave.

Crockta looked at Ilya's face. It was a familiar smile. As he nodded and turned around, Crockta thought about his own actions.

Alsein entered Elsanad's residence. It was beautiful, but at the same time, he couldn't erase the feeling of desolation.

Everything was well maintained and kept the same. The garden was always kept in the same shape that never changed, even with the passing seasons. Gardeners watched the landscape with bated breath each and every day.

Inside the mansion. He bumped into an elf maid. She flinched and hurriedly moved, entering an open room and not leaving until Alsein passed by. Alsein was familiar with this place, so he kept moving.

He arrived at the drawing room and saw that refreshments were already prepared. However, there were no signs of the people who prepared it. It was like he was alone in the mansion.

Those who worked in Elsanad's mansion were never allowed to show themselves. They had to work for Elsanad's convenience in inconspicuous ways. It was the same whether they were gardeners, maids, or cooks.

They obviously existed somewhere, but Alsein couldn't see them.

That was Elsanad's mansion. This was because someone coming and going while working would disturb the beauty of the mansion. It was a standard close to perfection that others couldn't understand.

Elsanad was the one who made it happen.

Alsein sipped his tea. Elsanad couldn't be seen. She wasn't in the mansion right now. Suddenly, a familiar face appeared.

Elwina.

"Young Lady."

"Alsein, what happened?"

She seemed to be in a good mood. Her smiling face resembled Elsanad. She moved like she had done something good like a child who had received a Christmas present. It was a beautiful sight for anyone to see.

But Alsein's face hardened as he saw her.

"Young Lady."

"Huh?"

“Perhaps...”

Alsein put down his cup of tea. “...It’s nothing.”

“Why? What is it?”

Alsein touched the cup with his fingers and asked again. “You look good. Did you get a new doll?”

“How did you know?”

“.....”

Alsein rose from his seat and approached Elwina. Her green eyes that resembled Elsanad’s looked up at Alsein.

“What did I tell you?” Alsein caught her shoulder. “You shouldn’t do this hobby.”

“Why can’t I do what I want?”

“The daughter of Arnin’s mayor...”

“Are you angry right now?”

Elwina pouted. Her pink lips looked dirty, and Alsein turned his head like he couldn’t speak anymore.

“I should be going back. Tell the mayor to come and meet me tomorrow.”

Elwina smiled, but Alsein immediately turned his body around. He quickly left the mansion.

Elwina's face appeared in his head. Elwina's face gradually shifted to Elsanad's face. He shook his head. Ilya's voice shouting in the square entered his head. Alsein tried to get rid of it again. He felt dizzy and stopped in the middle of the street.

Looking around, he spotted a familiar shape. It wasn't a common appearance in Arnin. The person gradually approached.

“Alsein.”

It was the orc Crockta.

“...Crockta, what a coincidence.”

Crockta shook his head. “No. I was looking for you.”

He smiled. The orc's smile was strange, but Alsein couldn't think it was terrible after being told about Crockta by Enyanis. He didn't know about all orc warriors, but this one was a man who deserved to be an honorary citizen.

Crockta asked,

“Would you like a drink?”

Alsein was surprised by the sudden offer.

“Drink.”

A drink.

It had been a long time since he last drank alcohol, but it didn't seem to be too bad of an idea right now. Elwina's face was sitting heavily in his head, so he could wash it away with strong alcohol. He wanted to get rid of the faces of Elsanad, Elwina, and Ilya that were making him sick.

Crockta was a stranger, but he seemed more reliable than anyone else Alsein knew. The usual Alsein would've never done something like this. But right now, he wanted to do it.

They entered a small pub nearby. The elves stared at Crockta the orc, but soon went back to their own affairs. The two people sat down in the corner. Elves generally drank fruit wine that had a fairly high alcohol content.

“You came to find me?”

“Yes.” Crockta drank the alcohol. The elven cups seemed small to

him. “Let me talk for a bit. Do you know the reason why I came here?”

“Well, I’m curious.”

The two raised their glasses.

Crockta started talking about his past.

Lenox’s work, the man who betrayed him, the attack of the humans, and Crockta’s revenge. Crockta told a brief story, but it was enough to show what type of orc he was. As a warrior, he set out for vengeance against the humans who killed his teacher.

As the story continued, the number of bottles in front of both of them increased. Alsein wasn’t a strong drinker. His eyes gazed into the distance as he put down his cup. His eyes shone as he started swaying and asked.

“...Why are you telling this story?”

Crockta talked about his past, the reason why he came here and about Ilya. The ledger was false and Ilya was the one who had done all the bad things.

“Then won’t your revenge go to waste?”

It was important for Crockta to get rid of the Thawing Balhae

Clan, but he could lose that chance for revenge if he told the truth.

“Don’t you already know?”

Crockta laughed.

Alsein silently drank the alcohol again. Those words. It was a question that didn’t need an answer.

There was no reason to tell a lie. However, the truth was a heavy burden on Alsein. The reason for not revealing the truth was due to the people who hid it.

Alsein gazed at Crockta.

A dreadful face, a muscled body, some fierce tattoos, and a fearsome greatsword on his back. He was a strong warrior. If Crockta was self-interested, then this could backfire. But Alsein wasn’t worried at all. For the first time in ages, he could trust someone.

“Crockta.”

“Yes.”

“Are you alive?”

Crockta laughed. Alsein had been deeply troubled after hearing Crockta talk about Lenox's death and his final teachings. Then he asked himself: Was he truly alive? Or was he merely breathing? He couldn't respond, so he wanted to hear Crockta's answer.

Crockta opened his mouth, "Of course I am alive."

"How come?"

Crockta took a sip of the alcohol and laughed. "I am breathing right now. Kung kung kung!"

"I see. Huhu."

"Kulkulkul!"

Crockta and Alsein both burst out laughing. The laughter stopped and Alsein nodded. He stared at the little bit of alcohol left in his cup and thought about something. Alsein looked at a distant place and said, "Crockta."

"Yes."

"Enyanis asked me, 'When Ilya first started the accusations, why did the mayor leave, instead of responding straight away?'"

"That's right."

“Since you have told me the truth, I will tell you the truth.”

“Huh?”

“I am drunk, so listen carefully before I regret it.”

“What...?”

“At the time, I thought it would be enough.”

Crockta closed his mouth. Alsein stated, “Crockta.”

“Yes.”

Alsein drank the alcohol remaining in the cup. He stared at Crockta with eyes that seemed completely sober.

“Go to the basement in Mayor Elsanad’s home.”

After his words, Alsein lost consciousness and his head dropped down.

Chapter 39 – Honorary Citizen

Under the cover of night, Crockta crossed the wall. Mayor Elsanad's mansion was quiet. He walked past the garden and up to the front door. He turned the doorknob, opening the door. A deep darkness blanketed the inside.

Crockta stepped forward. His footsteps echoed thanks to the structure of the mansion. His eyes scanned the darkness. The mansion, which was beautiful under the sun, looked creepy in the darkness.

Chobeok. Chobeok.

He crossed the corridor while looking in the rooms. None of the doors were locked. He passed by the deserted ones. Then suddenly, Crockta saw a shape looking at him in the darkness.

“.....!”

It was a statue. The faint moonlight shining through the windows gave him a glimpse of the outline. It was a statue of an elf staring into the air.

Crockta reached out to it. The texture of cold plaster could be felt. The physical shape looked real, and it seemed like it would move in the darkness.

Crockta slowly turned his gaze to the side. The elf statue was

guarding something. The door was firmly closed. He grabbed the handle, but the door didn't open. It was the only locked place that he had discovered in Elsanad's mansion.

Crockta looked around. It was dark but his eyes could see the shape of everything. Nothing moved. There were no indications of any people. It was eerie. Crockta gave strength to his hand. He gripped the doorknob tightly. It gradually creaked until it fell off with a low sound. Pieces of the door fell off.

The door opened. Crockta entered. Then he flinched once again. In the large room, there were several statues similar to the one at the entrance. They looked so alive that he almost swung his greatsword at them.

Crockta explored inside. In addition to the statues, paintings were hung on the walls. The paintings were expensive pieces of artwork signed by the artist. It was a room where Elsanad's aesthetics could be felt.

Crockta wandered through the room and paused in front of a painting. It was crude compared to the other paintings. However, it was the signed name below that made him stop.

Elwina. Elsanad's daughter.

It was a crude work with a human and elf standing side by side. Elwina had tried to draw every detail, despite her lack of skills. It was a painting drawn by a person with a high interest in the human body.

Crockta looked at it for a while before lifting the painting from the wall. He found it. There was a recess in the wall where the painting was hanging, with a button inside.

Crockta pressed it. The floor started to tremble slightly. Crockta turned his head towards the sound. The bottom of the floor was slowly opening. Slowly, stairs leading downwards were revealed. They were stairs heading to the basement.

Alsein's voice telling him to visit Elsanad's basement popped into Crockta's head.

It was here. Crockta took one step. It was a small passage for him. One step, two steps, his footsteps echoed as he descended.

He headed downwards for a while before reaching the end of the stairs. There was a door. Something was beyond it. Crockta remembered Alsein's eyes. His eyes had been shaking. What did he know? What was he troubled over?

Crockta opened the door. Then he took one step.

“.....!”

A chill went down his spine. There were the dark shadows of dozens of people who were looking at Crockta in the darkness.

He lowered the hand that had moved to the handle of his greatsword. His fingers shook. They didn't move.

Inside the basement there were people staring blankly at the air, not at Crockta. Crockta's heart sank as he saw their faces.

The face of Elwina, who greeted visitors at the entrance of Arnin, popped into his head. He later found out that she was Elsanad's daughter. He thought that she was just a spoiled person. But that wasn't it.

In fact, she had a world of her own that she couldn't communicate with others. It was a world that could never be tolerated.

Crockta reached for a nearby elf. He felt soft skin, but it was cool and didn't feel alive.

'Is this why she's so obsessed with working as a guard?'

Alsein had said this in passing and Crockta now realized what he meant. She chose victims that no one would care about if they died. No one would know where and how they had disappeared. Visitors disappeared in droves after visiting Arnin.

Elwina's goal was those visitors. Crockta was no exception.

"It is a tragedy."

Crockta muttered. His head dropped as he was surrounded by dozens of stuffed victims.

All of them were beautiful. A face with beautiful proportions. Dark blue eyes. Unusual hair color or pinkish red lips. The slender legs, elegant shoulders, and long, delicate necks made them victims.

Elwina had stuffed them to maintain their beauty and to keep them forever in her collection. It was a horrible tragedy.

Crockta closed his eyes.

Their sins weighed heavily on him. Arnin was a beautiful city, but it was an abode where numerous beasts with human faces were tangled together.

A demon sold his people for wealth and power, deceiving his victims with a smile. The other demon, who stuffed the visitors of the city, strolled among the citizens under the protection of her mother.

All of the citizens believed in and followed them. It was a terrible mess of deception and evil. There was no truth anywhere.

Crockta's hand clenched into a fist, his body starting to uncontrollably shake. The stuffed truths were staring at Crockta. He raised his eyes. His eyes met those of an elf child. The little elf

child was smiling. That smile was stopped forever.

Crockta sighed.

Lenox. His face popped into Crockta's head.

'What would you do?

Would you have an answer for this tragedy?'

Lenox looked at him and smiled. He slowly opened his mouth. Lenox's voice echoed. He only said one word to Crockta, but it was enough.

There was always only one answer.

Crockta nodded.

Bul'tar.

The sun shone in the sky.

Ilya and Mayor Elsanad met again in the square to debate over the controversial issue and to determine who the next mayor would be. The two mayor candidates. Elsanad and Ilya. Depending

on the outcome of this debate, the future of Arnin would be decided.

“Elsanad, changing the topic is meaningless. You are the culprit. There is clear evidence with this book, yet you would deny your sins until the end?”

“I can’t say anything. It is a fake book, anyone could make that. I could also forge a book and claim that you were behind it.”

“Do you admit that you would handle things that way? Did you run the city like this? Through forgery and deceit?”

“You use cowardly means. Don’t change the topic. Right now, what you are doing is deception.”

The conversation was going nowhere. Elsanad countered calmly, but Ilya was excellent at stirring up the citizens. The crowd split in half and cheered for the politician they were supporting. Arnin guards were around the stage in case of an emergency.

Ilya and Elsanad continued the debate on the stage.

Now no one was concerned about the victims. The story of the elves being trafficked had been forgotten, and the voices of the victims vanished without a trace as no one in Arnin cared for such things.

One orc ran across the square.

“W-What?”

The man who was bumped into turned his head away as he met the orc's fierce gaze. The orc had a determined expression on his face. His greatsword was on his shoulder as he walked towards Elsanad and Ilya.

“Entry isn't permitted.”

The guards around the stage blocked him. The orc didn't go any further. He stood there and looked at the two politicians. Ilya suddenly noticed his presence and turned his head towards the orc. However, he didn't care about the orc, and kept criticizing Elsanad. Elsanad's eyes darkened.

There was no guilt in them. The orc confirmed this fact and turned towards the citizens. He saw the faces of the citizens. Interest, tension excitement etc., all types of emotions were swirling.

However, there wasn't what he needed most. It was anger. No one was truly angry.

The orc felt anger fill his chest as he shouted.

“Everyone——!”

The orc's voice rang out in the square.

“Quiet———!”

An intense cry that shook the eardrums of the listeners. The shouting of an orc warrior, which hadn't been heard for a long time in Arnin, shook Arnin Square.

“.....!”

A sobering voice! The square became quiet in an instant. Everyone looked at the orc who was the epicentre of the sound. The guards didn't know what to do and just watched him. Ilya and Elsanad, who were making claims on the stage, also quieted down.

All the eyes and ears in the square were focused on the orc. The orc lifted something up. A crystal ball was in his thick hands.

Ilya's face turned pale.

“Now.”

Crockta declared. Then a human came forward.

It was a human magician, Puri. He had been helped by Crockta on the plains along with Gilliam, so he was now paying back the favor. Puri raised a hand, his magic power wrapping around the crystal ball.

The crystal ball started shining. In the air, a giant video appeared. It was the memory playback magic that could play videos in the crystal ball! It was an expensive item, and the magic required to activate it was difficult. The citizens paid attention to it.

The video that appeared was stabilized. Someone's face appeared. It was Ilya, his face floating in the air. He moved within the crystal ball and spoke. His remarks were reproduced.

-...Yes, I will tell you everything. I sold the elves together with the people from Thawing Balhae. I had a deal with them.

Ilya jumped up.

-...And I got tired of them. I had drained just enough from them. Those cursed by the stars, did they really think I would deal with them forever? Thank you for your help.

The citizens started murmuring again. The truth that they were arguing over had finally been revealed. Ilya's ugly remarks followed.

-...Anyway, I will become Arnin's next mayor. That's it. You can leave quietly.

The eyes of the citizens turned towards Ilya in unison. His face distorted and Elsanad's face brightened. She didn't know who the

orc was, but he had given evidence of her innocence. She used this momentum.

A complacent expression appeared on her face.

“Citizens! Have you seen everything? This man tried to discredit me and fool the citizens!” She raised her fist. “As the mayor of Arnin and a citizen, I will make a formal accusation against the coward Ilya!”

Then she shouted to one of the Arnin guards.

“Guard, take him to jail right now!”

The citizens alternated looking between Elsanad, Ilya, and the orc. They were confused due to the sudden situation. However, the citizens soon responded to Elsanad’s words.

“That guy!”

“Ilya was the culprit!”

“The mayor is innocent!”

But the video didn’t end there. The screen jumped and this time a white mansion at night appeared.

It was a building that every citizen in Arnin knew. The mansion was one of the most beautiful buildings in Arnin. Elsanad's home.

The citizens stopped again.

“.....?”

The video moved gradually as it followed the eyes of the filmer.

Over the wall and once inside, the person arrived at a room filled with statues and paintings. Elsanad's mansion continued to be shown. The citizens looked at the screen with confusion over what they were seeing.

Elsanad's face stiffened as she saw it.

“Stop that right now!”

She tried to run off the stage. But Ilya grabbed Elsanad's wrist. He sensed something in her reaction.

On the video, the secret door to the basement opened. The video started going down.

Elsanad shouted, “Guards! Stop that orc! Stop him!”

But the video continued without stopping.

“.....!”

The terrible truth was revealed. The citizens were surprised to see the elves and humans inside the room, and were shocked as they understood what it meant. It was a terrible scene that they had never imagined.

The owner of the video gazed at the stuffed animals for a while. On the screen, the faces of the elves, humans, and a smiling child could be seen. The screen moved along with his eyes. At first glance, there were more than 20 stuffed people. Everyone looked alive and motionless, like they were still breathing.

There were citizens who stumbled at the scene. The truth was harsh. This demon, who was a serial killer, was the leader of the city. The gaze of the person filming moved downwards.

He looked at his feet. The screen displayed the floor. The murmur of the person filming resonated in the ears of the citizens.

-It is a tragedy.

It was a calm voice. Then the screen showing the floor cut off.

The crystal ball finished its role and broke into pieces. The video ended, but nobody moved.

Silence. Everyone in the square had stopped moving. In that stillness, the orc alone moved.

He turned around. He gazed towards Ilya and Elsanard, the two demons, and said.

“Ilya and Elsanad.”

They didn’t move.

“With the evidence I just presented, I accuse you.”

The stunned guards recovered their spirits. They looked at each other and then started walking towards Ilya and Elsanad. Now they were horrible criminals.

Elsanad exclaimed, “Don’t make me laugh! This is all fabricated! You might have a pass to enter Arnin, but you aren’t a citizen! Not even a citizen, yet a dirty orc dares accuse me? Impossible!”

It was her last-ditch effort.

“On the subject of the orc! Who the hell are you listening to? Guards, do you believe an orc over your mayor? Someone who isn’t even a citizen?”

It was Elsanad’s futile struggle to delay her downfall. Even Ilya stared at Elsanad with disgust in his eyes. But Elsanad was the

mayor. The guards stopped moving the moment they heard her cry. Then they looked at the orc accusing her.

All eyes fell on the orc once again. But he had a cold expression on his face.

The orc opened his mouth, “Listen up, Elsanad.”

The orc spoke in a distinctively thick and low voice. “I am someone who is equal to the citizens of Arnin.”

His voice rang out through the square.

“All rights enjoyed by the citizens of Arnin are equally applied to me. It is a legitimate right granted for the dedication and merits I have contributed to Arnin, one that nobody can withdraw unless I commit an offense that undermines Arnin’s justice.”

He pulled something out. His evidence sparkled under the sun. Everyone’s gaze turned to the proof of identity.

The orc declared, “I am Crockta, the one given an honorary citizenship by Enyanis, the plains administrator.”

Chapter 40 – Chesswood (1)

“What will you do?” asked Jeremy, Derek’s subordinate.

Derek had invested in Ilya betting on Elsanad’s downfall, but the results had turned in an unexpected direction. Crockta had accused both Ilya and Elsanad.

“Wait a minute.”

Derek was writing at his desk in his office. Jeremy waited. Derek wrote something for a while before putting down his pen.

“I wish you luck... Let’s pray that the Ashira flowers will bloom soon... Which one is okay?”

Jeremy’s eyes widened. It was because there was a smile in Derek’s voice.

“I think both are good.”

“If you think it is bad, then you can tell me.”

Jeremy nodded and asked Derek a question. “Is the person a man or a woman?”

“A man.”

“Then the former would be better.”

“But he is an elf.”

“Then I will recommend the latter.”

“You are very prejudiced about gender and species.”

Derek laughed and picked up his pen again. The sentence about the flowers blooming was derived from an epic poem. The Ashira flowers decorating a garland meant a march of victory. It was meant to express good luck, but in a less dry manner.

“Do you know how long it has been since I had to write a letter to fix an unexpected problem?”

“I’ve never seen it happen.”

“Yes. It was so long ago that I don’t even remember it.”

Derek placed the letter in an envelope and sealed it with candle wax and handed it to Jeremy. “Very interesting.”

“Is this as you expected?”

“Jeremy, victory is only worth it if you meet a difficult and

unexpected problem, and manage to jump over it.”

Jeremy was told to deliver a letter. The recipient was a name that he didn't know.

“Who is it?”

“Who? My new puppet.”

Derek laughed. “Our orc warrior has upset Arnin, so now I need someone to fix it.”

“Then...”

“The bad guys have been cleansed. However, new villains always appear in the world.”

Jeremy nodded. This was why he followed Derek. Jeremy had never seen any gaps in Derek. He responded as if everything was as expected, and produced results according to his own will.

It was also true for his incident. Crockta did things in a way that they hadn't expected. Ilya, whom they had invested in, was now a criminal and would be held in Arnin's dungeon. Derek had said that this was unexpected, but Jeremy didn't think so. Derek had plenty of precautions for just in case.

In the larger picture, Derek still controlled everything according

to his will.

“Also, pass on the following information to Crockta.”

“Even though he broke the contract?”

“In a way, I was in the wrong.”

Crockta had placed a condition in the contract. He wouldn't do anything that would go against a warrior's honor.

“I didn't know that Ilya and Elsanad were such villains, so I suppose it was to be expected that Crockta would be so willful.”

“I understand.”

“Please. This time, I hope that you will help Crockta a bit.”

Jeremy read the letter recipient's name again and nodded. The recipient was the Arnin Plains administrator, Enyanis.

Now that Ilya and Elsanad had fallen, Arnin would need a new mayor. It didn't matter who they were. As long as he accepted Derek's help, he would become the new mayor of Arnin. The citizens would be enthusiastic about him without knowing his deceit. This was the world that Jeremy saw.

The two politicians turned out to be criminals. There was a city wide outrage. They desired a new beginning. As there was a lot of excitement for a fresh start, new politicians appeared in Arnin and spoke about clearing up the ugly past.

The name of the honorary citizen Crockta also filled the city. However, the orc didn't want the attention and didn't appear in front of the people. There was a huge response for Enyanis, the elf who appointed him as the honorary citizen.

A statue of the honorary citizen was erected in Arnin Square. It was of an orc, not an elf, nor a human.

They didn't write his name in respect for his will, but all of the citizens of Arnin knew who the honorary citizen was. It was an expression of the citizen's wish for an 'honorary citizen' to appear again whenever Arnin was corrupted.

"I'm tired."

Crockta hid his body because of his popularity. A hood covered his face, but it couldn't hide the orc's unique size, so he refrained from going out as much as possible.

"It is because you are the only orc in Arnin," Enyanis said.

"Are you really leaving?"

“I have something to do.”

“Too bad. It would be nice if you could’ve stayed longer.”

Derek had unexpectedly given Crockta information about the next destination. Crockta became aware of another Thawing Balhae base. The name of the destination was Chesswood.

This time, Derek didn’t ask for anything. Derek’s messenger said that Crockta could do what he wanted. It was hard for Crockta to guess Derek’s intentions, but he chose not to think too deeply. He would do what he needed to do.

“This was the first place I saw you.”

Crockta and Enyanis were standing on the Arnin Plains where they first met. Enyanis nodded. He looked at the rock that Crockta left behind. ‘A warrior doesn’t attack unarmed people.’ The thrill Enyanis felt at that time was still vivid in his mind.

The orc in front of him was the type of person that he had never met before. Many people spoke about justice with their mouths, but it was the first time he saw someone act directly on their words. He was looking forward to the orc’s actions in the future.

“Where are you going?”

“Chesswood.”

“Chesswood...”

It is the land of humans.

And the word that best suited it was ‘pandemonium.’ A cursed place. But if it was this orc, it might turn out well.

“Good luck. I hope that every step you take is filled with Ashira flowers.”

“Thank you.”

Crockta didn’t know what it implied, but it sounded good. Suddenly, a yell was heard from those hunting the triters on the plains.

“Wahh! Help me!”

A man was running away from a triter, but Crockta wasn’t the one who moved. Suddenly, dozens of arrows flew through the air and pierced the triter. It was the skill of the user Yurin, who had joined the Arnin Plain’s Rescue Unit after Crockta. She winked as she noticed Crockta’s gaze. Crockta nodded.

In addition to Yurin, other NPCs and users were wearing the red rescue vest that symbolized the Arnin Plains’ Rescue Unit. Those who didn’t have the ability relied on the rescue unit to help them

out with the triters. The Arnin Plains were filled with a lot of warmth.

“This is your heritage.”

The number of people who died hunting the triters greatly decreased. Crockta had made a contribution as the honorary citizen, alleviating the criticism towards other species.

“Well, let’s live and see each other again.”

It was time to leave. Crockta extended his fist in the orc manner. Enyanis also extended his fist. The orc greeting was strange, but he could feel something. Something seemed to rise in him as his fist met the orc’s hard skin.

The two people firmly bumped fists.

Crockta turned around. The large orc moved away from Arnin. It was calm after the great orc left.

“Phew.”

Somebody approached Enyanis, who had been staring blankly. It was Jeremy, who had been sent by Derek. Jeremy whistled as he stood beside Enyanis.

“Phew. That orc is truly frightening.”

Enyanis stared at him. Jeremy turned around. Both of them had already talked to each other. Jeremy asked, “Anyway, have you made up your mind?”

“You will definitely keep the promise?”

“Of course. We’ll help you.”

“I didn’t know a mere money lender would have so much money.”

“Watch your mouth. Derek is more than that.”

Enyanis nodded. “Okay.”

“It’s a deal.”

“But keep this in mind. I might receive political funds from you, but I won’t do anything unjust.”

“We’ll soon see.”

Jeremy grinned. Everyone was like that at first. “Then other people will come and talk to you about the rest. I have to go.”

“Are you going with Crockta?”

“He doesn’t need to know.”

Jeremy looked in the direction that Crockta went. Derek said it was fine, but Jeremy was unsure. He would keep a close eye on the orc.

Ian disconnected.

He checked his watch and saw that he had been playing for a long time. The strange thing was that he didn’t feel dizzy or tired at all. His body was refreshed, like he had a good night’s sleep.

He looked back on the previous game play. He was immersed, like he really was Crockta. The things that happened in the place called Arnin truly made him furious.

Thanks to Arnin, his achievement points had gone up tremendously. Despite accusing a high ranking NPC like the mayor, he seemed to have been praised for his influence in the world of Elder Lord. As his achievement points rose, his level also increased.

Now there weren’t a lot of people playing Elder Lord who could ignore him.

He went out to the living room and turned on the TV. [Elder Lord News] was playing, a program that briefly told news about the world of Elder Lord. There was also news about Arnin's mayor replacement. The details weren't revealed, but it mentioned that Arnin's mayor and mayor candidate were arrested after the accusation of a citizen.

“Umm...”

He checked his phone and saw that it was the busy time at the café. He had left Han Yeori in charge. An image of her looking at him resentfully appeared in his head. He needed to pay a bit of attention to her.

Ian left his house and drove to the café. After parking the car and entering the café, he heard the greeting of the new part-timer, Yoo Sooyeon.

“Welcome! This is Café Reason.”

It was a cheerful voice that brightened up the listener's mood. Ian nodded. Han Yeori had taught her well. Han Yeori confirmed Ian's appearance and said, “It's the boss.”

“.....!”

There was something strange. Yoo Sooyeon's expression sank as she heard Han Yeori's words. It felt like she had lost all sense of animation. It was a subtle distinction, but Ian could clearly feel it.

Han Yeori looked at Ian and nodded towards a corner.

Ian turned towards where she was indicating.

“.....!”

Ian was surprised again. A familiar woman was elegantly sitting down with her legs crossed while also drinking a cup of coffee.

She was Ji Hayeon, the heir to the Myeongsong Group. She had already seen Ian and was smiling at him. The men in suits that Ian had seen outside the café were because of her.

Ian approached. Ji Hayeon spoke first. “Have you been busy these days?”

“I think Hayeon-ssi is busier than me.”

“That’s right. I’m busy, but I made some time.”

She took a sip of coffee. It was like a scene from a movie.

“Ian-ssi, do you want some coffee? Or are you tired of it, after owning a café?”

“Not really.”

“Have you eaten?”

There were a lot of questions. Ian smiled and shook his head.
“No.”

“Then do you want to go and have dinner together? I’ll buy it for you.”

Ian shook his head again. Ji Hayeon’s expression became sulky.
“I’m sorry, I’m going to eat dinner with someone else later.”

“Who?”

He looked at Han Yeori instead of answering. She was making a drink for a customer. She seemed listless, so he was going to buy her delicious food.

“Is it like that between you two?”

“It’s just a boss and employee relationship.”

“Hrm...”

She looked at Ian like she was suspicious. Ian just shrugged. The conversation between the two broke off. Ji Hayeon seemed to be thinking about something as she hesitated before opening her mouth.

“Do you play Elder Lord?”

Ian looked at her.

Recently, he discovered that Elder Saga Corporation was an affiliate of the Myeongsong Group. Therefore, he didn't feel like her question was strange.

“Yes.”

“I see.”

“What about Hayeon-ssi?”

“I don't. Um...maybe Ian-ssi shouldn't play it either.”

She could be called a shareholder of Elder Lord. Ian cocked his head. “Is there a problem?”

“Nothing, just...”

Her voice trailed off.

Ji Hayeon's father, Ji Eunchul, didn't allow his family to play Elder Lord.

It was due to safety. It was a secret that Elder Lord's core system

wasn't properly controlled. Even though the user protection system on the capsules guaranteed the safety of the users, Ji Eunchul had strictly forbidden any shareholders from playing it.

It was a matter that involved the reputation of the Myeongsong Group, so the company was using every means possible to find Yoo Jaehan, the only man who could solve it. However, he was nowhere to be found.

Ji Hayeon couldn't explain that to Ian, so she laughed it off as a joke.

“Don't people turn violent after playing games? Huhu.”

She glanced somewhere else. One of her bodyguards outside the café was pointing to his watch. It was almost time for her next appointment. She wanted to cancel it for dinner with Ian, but it seemed like today wouldn't work. She sighed. “I was rejected today. Do you dislike me?”

“That's impossible.”

Ian laughed. “I'll have dinner with you next time.”

“Okay, it's a promise. How about the day after tomorrow?”

“Okay.”

“It’s a promise.”

Ji Hayeon rose from his seat. “Then, I’ll see you the day after tomorrow.”

“Yes.”

She left the café with her unique and elegant gestures.

Ian headed to the counter after seeing her off. Yoo Sooyeon greeted Ian. She had been helped by Ian, and had become noticeably brighter ever since she started the part-time job. Han Yeori glanced at Ian.

“Boss-nim, what do you want? An espresso?”

It was a sullen voice. Ian laughed. “Yeori.”

“Yes.”

“Let’s close up early today, and come have a good meal with me.”

“Omo, really?”

Her expression changed in an instant.

“Yes.”

“Ah, didn’t you have an appointment with her?”

“No.”

“Can I eat something expensive?”

“Yes.”

Han Yeori nodded. The café’s automatic door opened and some customers entered. Han Yeori greeted them quickly.

“Welcome. This is Café Reason.”

She once again returned to her normal animated self. Ian started laughing.

Chapter 41 – Chesswood (2)

Crockta didn't like the sound of footsteps behind him. He stopped and looked back.

“Why do you keep following me?”

But the other person didn't feel intimidated. “We're just going the same way, so don't flatter yourself. Did you rent this road? How much did you pay to rent it?”

“.....”

It was Derek's subordinate, Jeremy. He had caught up as Crockta left Arnin, and headed northeast to Chesswood.

“Good, renting is comfortable. Renter, renter, renter, renter... ick.” Jeremy smiled at Crockta's fierce glare. “You are scary. Relax, Brother”

“.....”

Crockta decided to ignore him. He started moving again.

Jeremy whistled from behind him. Jeremy's whistling was very clear and high. At first, Crockta thought it was a flute sound. There was a time when he admired it, but now that whistling didn't sound very pleasant.

Jeremy's whistle rang throughout the plains.

Thus, they continued their awkward companionship.

As the name suggested, the Chesswood area that they were heading to had small human villages scattered about in a checkered pattern. Chesswood wasn't a big city like Arnin was, but a cluster of various small villages gathered together with their own system.

What was the Thawing Balhae Clan doing there? Would he be able to find Grom's new character, the traitor called Hyunchul, and get revenge?

The future was unknown, so he had to do the best that he could right now. Crockta decided to just go there for now.

As they headed further east from Arnin, the forest disappeared, and an oft-traveled trail could be seen. If he proceeded to the center of the continent in this direction, he would be able to reach the big cities of the other species.

"Hey, Orc brother."

"...I am called Crockta."

"Oh. Are we already friendly enough to call each other by name?"

Is this Day 1 of our relationship?”

“.....”

Crockta wanted to kill him.

“What are you going to do with the cursed people in Chesswood? Are you going to use the Concrete method?”

“There is no need to know.”

“No, I’m Derek’s delegate, so I should know if you’re planning to do something strange. Our investment might fly away, after all. I need to know since our money is on the line.”

“Where did Derek invest in Chesswood?”

“Secret, a secret.”

At the end of his words, Jeremy was standing beside Crockta. Crockta glanced at him but didn’t point it out.

“Isn’t that a good sword? Is it expensive?” Jeremy asked.

“It’s the work of the Golden Anvil clan.”

“Hyu, how great. I’m envious. I also want to buy a new sword.”

As they talked, the two people started walking together.

Jeremy started to whistle again. Crockta didn't know where it came from, but there was a melody to it. It wasn't too bad to walk leisurely while listening to Jeremy.

"You are good." He said.

"When I was a child, I was proud of both my whistling and my sword skills." Jeremy started whistling again. The sound was crisp, and sounded good overall. "Orc brother, do you know any songs?"

"Songs?"

"I don't think that a whistle can come out well from an orc's lips, so how about a song? Your voice is pretty good."

"A song."

There was the orc song that he had learned from a pub in Orcrox. Maybe he should try it once. Crockta coughed. Jeremy looked at him with expectant eyes.

"Hmm hmm." He cleared his throat. It was slightly embarrassing singing this alone. However, he couldn't betray Jeremy's expectations, so he started awkwardly singing the warrior's song.

“We are orcs! The mighty orcs! You’ll be in trouble if you mess with us! The great warriors have appeared. Humans, get lost! Elves...get lost! Dwarves, get lost...! Gnomes...”

It was an exciting song when sung in a group, but it was shameful to shout it out alone. The contents of ‘Gnomes, get lost’ followed by ‘warriors don’t need a woman’ didn’t fall from his mouth.

“.....”

Jeremy looked taken aback.

“.....!”

Jeremy flashed an awkward and nodded. “G-Great.”

It was humiliating. It would’ve been okay if Jeremy had teased him. But even Jeremy wasn’t able to make fun of him! He even pretended and gave Crockta a compliment!

Crockta became anxious and dropped his head.

It was impossible for humans to understand the wonderful song of orc warriors. He tried to maintain the spirit of victory. But he was a warrior who could face reality, so he couldn’t turn away from his conscious and pride.

“Isn’t every culture different? Ha, haha.”

Crockta felt more shame at Jeremy’s nice remark. Therefore, Crockta cleared his throat again. He wanted to let this guy know what a real song was.

He said, “That was just a joke.”

“No. The song was good, Brother.”

“I will let you hear what a real song is.”

“There is no need...”

Crockta grabbed Jeremy’s shoulder. He flinched. “Jeremy.”

“Yes...?”

“Have you ever been in love?”

“L...Love?”

“Yes, love.”

“What...I did have a love relationship...?”

“Then listen.”

Crockta was very serious. He closed his eyes and remembered the sound. Right now he had the low bass tones of an orc that most singers couldn't mimic.

He recalled his school days. That boy's genuineness as he wept still breathed in his chest. He poured out the distant memories into the lyrics. This song would suffice.

Crockta's voice poured out like a sigh.

“Just like I wasn't prepared for the rain, I sent you away with silence.”

“.....!”

Jeremy's eyes widened. Crockta's voice, which was strangely low, sank calmly. The lyrics he sang were beautiful and melancholy, just like a poem.

“For a while, I would get drunk or sleep at dawn, trying to forget you.”

“.....”

“I can't forget that time, I realized something while thinking...”

“Ah...”

Crockta’s low voice rang out. The bass tone was filled with heartbreaking emotions.

“A good person, if I had cherished you then, I wouldn’t have been so sad when we broke up...!”

Jeremy closed his eyes. Suddenly, an old relationship passed through his mind.

Jane. Her name was unforgettable, Jane. Both of them were in love, but she was the daughter of a well known family, and Jeremy was just a swordsman from the back streets. It was a relationship that wasn’t possible. A painful love. She eventually left him, but Jeremy couldn’t blame her.

She...was a good person... Jeremy’s eyes became wet.

Now Crockta’s song was reaching the climax. The end of the heartbreaking love song rang out.

“I would like to say that I will always protect you, please come back again...I’ll make amends...”

His song was over.

Crockta closed his eyes and become drunk on his emotions for a

while. Just like there was black soul in reality, Elder Lord had the orcs. It was a vocal structure that seemed born for this type of song.

A stunning performance.

Clap. Clap. Clap.

He opened his eyes at the sound of applause. It was from Jeremy. However, he wasn't the only one applauding. Crockta and Jeremy turned their heads at the same time. There was a strange man wiping his watery eyes.

"I heard it very well. It was a song that really made me feel like my heart was breaking."

"You..."

The man was carrying a musical instrument resembling a guitar. "I am the minstrel Blackmore. I was heading this way when I heard a heartfelt voice by chance. It was a really great song."

"I am embarrassed."

"Don't be, Brother. It really was amazing. You were hiding your singing skills." Jeremy also acknowledged Crockta's song.

Blackmore asked, "Did you create that song?"

“No, I just imitated the song of another singer.”

“I see... But the impression you have given me hasn't faded. What is your name?”

“I am called Crockta.”

“Based on your direction, are you perhaps heading to Chesswood?”

“Yes.”

“I am also heading there. Do you mind if I accompany you?”

“Feel free to do so.”

Crockta and Jeremy were joined by Blackmore. A light conversation was started after that as Blackmore asked, “The lyrics to that song are especially beautiful. What is the title of the song?”

“As the lyrics said, it's called ‘Good Person’.”

“Good Person... How great. If you love a good person, you won't be sad if you break up...”

Blackmore nodded and wrote something in his notebook. “Of

course... That doesn't mean that you weren't really sad..."

"Right..."

"Kuoh..."

Paradoxical lyrics that a man could understand! The eyes of the three men became distant. They were gazing at old memories.

"I had those days as well... Orc, why are you going to Chesswood? Are you going to participate in the contest...?"

"Contest?"

"Ah, you don't know. A small contest for minstrels will be held in Chesswood."

"Hoh, really?"

"It isn't a big competition. It's a small contest between the Chesswood villages, but the pride of the villages is at stake. I know since I am from Chesswood. That's why I returned home after a long time."

"I would like to see you play."

"Hahaha. Please come and watch. I will be singing."

The conversation continued as they walked along the road. They started to enjoy music while walking. Blackmore played his instrument while Jeremy whistled. Crockta hummed along with his bold voice.

A jazz conversation with their own melodies! It was fun to enjoy the music without worrying.

“What are you talking about?” Suddenly, a voice was heard. Crockta looked in the direction of the sound.

It was a group of humans. Crockta didn’t miss the white star on the forehead of the woman riding in the lead.

“NPCs?”

“Isn’t this a funny combination? Orc musician?”

There were five people, all users. Jeremy was unconcerned but Blackmore welcomed them cheerfully. He greeted them.

“Hello!”

The woman who seemed to be leading the group laughed and replied. “Yes, hello. Mister Minstrel!” She was also friendly to NPCs. She seemed to be familiar with Elder Lord.

“I am the minstrel Blackmore, and these two are Crockta and Jeremy, who are accompanying me to Chesswood.”

Crockta and Jeremy lightly bowed.

“Oh my god, really? We are also going there.”

She turned around and talked briefly with her group. She seemed to be asking if they should join up. “Then would you like to go with us? I would like to hear your music. Is everybody here a minstrel?”

“Hahaha. I am the only minstrel, but they are musically talented.”

“Wow, great.”

Blackmore declared, “Let’s go together. Sharing music is a wonderful thing.”

The party increased. There was now a group of eight people heading to Chesswood.

Blackmore was returning to his home after a long time, so he started to sing song reminiscent of his hometown. It was a singing skill that was just as wonderful as his skill with the musical instrument. The users clapped in response.

Suddenly, Jeremy grabbed the hem of Crockta’s clothes and

pulled him close.

“Huh?”

“Brother, are they people cursed by the stars?”

He asked in a low voice. He knew that Crockta was one of those cursed by the stars and that they could recognize each other. Crockta nodded. Jeremy whispered again to Crockta, “Be careful.”

“About what?”

“Those guys and Chesswood.”

Jeremy pulled Crockta a little further away from the group.

“Blackmore, I don’t think he knows the news yet.” Jeremy squinted at Blackmore. Blackmore was playing his instrument with a bright face. “Chesswood isn’t an idle place right now.”

“Then...”

“It is a land of discord due to the cursed people.”

One user suddenly looked at the two of them. Jeremy slung his arm over Crockta and grinned. As the gaze of the user moved away, he whispered again in Crockta’s ears. “So these people over

there are enemies.”

“I see.”

Certainly, Enyanis of Arnin had referred to Chesswood as in a state of pandemonium. Crockta nodded.

“Do you understand?”

Jeremy hit Crockta’s chest and released him. Blackmore’s singing became louder.

In the distance, the dim shape of a village started to appear.

Chapter 42 – WATER (1)

There was smoke coming from the village in the distance.

Only Crockta and Jeremy noticed the faint smoke, as Blackmore and the other users were still laughing at the music playing.

There was a problem from the beginning. Jeremy stroked the handle of his sword, his tension subsiding. No matter what happened, it would fine as long as he had his sword. He was a swordsman, a born killer that even Derek acknowledged.

He was also aware from Derek that the orc was a powerful warrior.

“Mister, there is smoke,” The woman suddenly said.

Blackmore stopped playing his musical instrument. “What’s going on?”

Smoke continued to emerge from the village, gradually covering the sky above the village. Blackmore’s face stiffened. “This... It looks like a fire. I should hurry.”

Blackmore rushed towards the village with his musical instrument on his shoulders. As Blackmore prepared to move, one user walked over and knocked him over. Blackmore tumbled down to the ground. A corner of the musical instrument was destroyed. He lay on the floor and moaned.

“W-What...kuoohh...”

The users chuckled.

“It has already started.”

“Hey, wait for me.”

“There isn’t enough here to share.”

Crockta watched the users talking. Jeremy shrugged and pulled out his sword.

“Brother, didn’t I tell you?”

“.....”

“This is why I hate the cursed ones. They are scum that will hit people in the back.” Jeremy glanced at Crockta and added, “Of course, I will watch you more.”

The users approached them. Unlike Blackmore, the two of them had weapons and one of them was an orc, so the users were cautious.

“Will you be okay against an orc?”

“Believe in me.”

All of the users pulled out their weapons. The magician stepped back and prepared to support from the rear.

“If you kids are in danger, then call for me.” The female user who first talked to Blackmore grinned. “Anyway, our kids are in control of areas A1 to C4.”

Jeremy whistled. His long sword sparkled in the sun. It was small compared to Crockta’s sword, but the amount of human blood that had covered it was enough to make a small stream.

“Guys, don’t you see that this orc brother is angry? Do you want him to be angry? Do you want to bleed?” Jeremy joked around as he narrowed the distance. His movements were light.

Crockta also held his greatsword and lowered his center of gravity, gathering enough momentum to break through at once. Crockta scanned the area. It seemed that it was possible to take care of the front line, but the magician was the problem. He was already muttering something to complete a spell.

Magicians were always bothersome opponents. Crockta carefully looked for gaps in the enemies.

At that moment... Crockta’s eyes widened. Suddenly, the magician fell without a sound. Blackmore was standing behind the

magician. Blackmore met Crockta's eyes and winked. The crowd in front was still unaware of what happened to the magician. Crockta nodded and charged forward.

“Bul'tar———!”

Shouting the battle cry of the orc warriors before battle had now become a habit. Jeremy also ran after Crockta. Crockta rushed and swung his greatsword, the users pushed back by the impact. Jeremy leapt from behind Crockta and instantly pierced a user's neck with his sword. He was like the wind.

The confused users yelled out, “Magic! Use it quickly! Why aren't you using it?”

“What are you doing?”

Then they paled as they turned around. Blackmore didn't care as he looked at them with his foot on the magician's chest. At that moment, the users felt sure of their deaths.

It seemed like they could already feel Crockta and Jeremy's blades against their skin.

Their heads flew through the sky.

Crockta and Jeremy were too strong for them. They weren't just ordinary people, or various minstrels passing by, but a real orc warrior and a notorious swordsman from the back alleys of the

fugitive city of Anail.

The users' bodies turned white. It was the last of those cursed by the stars. Their equipment fell to the ground. There was nothing that looked great. Besides, they needed to hurry to the village.

Blackmore immediately started running towards the village. Jeremy and Crockta looked at each other and ran after him.

The village was a terrible mess. Several houses were burning. Battles between NPCs and users were occurring in various places in the village.

Blackmore looked around and found a piece of farm equipment. He broke the edge and made it into a club, swinging it in the air.

Jeremy and Crockta glanced at each other as they saw it. Blackmore's actions were quite skilled. Blackmore squeezed the rod, like he was trying to regain some old senses, before running into battle.

Crockta and Jeremy also helped in the battles. The villagers were all farmers, but they used their equipment to fight against the users. Their attacks turned one or two users into white particles.

Crockta's greatsword beheaded a user.

The users were too weak. There were some decent ones, but the majority of them looked like beginners that had just started Elder

Lord. There were many people who ran away from Crockta's fearsome appearance.

"Orc!"

"Run away! An orc!"

"Run away! Let's go!"

"I'm scared!"

"Monster!"

The users hurriedly ran away.

"....." Crockta didn't have a chance to fight properly with them.

Jeremy giggled and knocked against Crockta's shoulder with a teasing attitude. "Hey, Brother. Brother's face, well, it no longer frightens me as much. Don't take it personally."

"Noisy." Crockta turned around before adding something else. "I am a handsome orc."

That's right. Crockta was a handsome orc. In Orcrox, the female NPCs often ogled him. He had customized his face to be as horrible as possible to make fun of his sister, but it seemed to be attractive

to orcs.

Jeremy burst out laughing.

“By the way, what’s going on here? The cursed people are gathering together and attacking. Besides, aren’t they all weak?”

Crockta confirmed the equipment of the users that fell on the ground. They were all Common grade equipment.

“I can roughly guess.”

The users whom they defeated with Blackmore said that their area was from A1 to C4, and the users here had poor combat abilities. The local characteristic of Chesswood was that the villages were scattered about in a checkered pattern.

The recurring evils that humans committed in online games were being repeated in Elder Lord.

“Blackmore! You came back!”

“Blackmore?”

There was a disturbance. The villagers finished fighting and discovered that Blackmore had returned. However, their reaction wasn’t like what Crockta expected. Rather, it was the opposite.

“Why did this guy all of a sudden...”

“I thought you left?”

They were reluctant to talk to Blackmore. Some even spat on the ground, like he was unlucky.

Blackmore just looked down and touched his half-broken instrument.

“Haha. Blackmore, becoming a minstrel, I really can’t believe it.”

Crockta and Jeremy stayed at the home of Blackmore’s uncle, Ingram. He was tall, sturdy, and looked very strong for his age.

“You didn’t originally leave your home to become a minstrel?”
They asked.

“Blackmore? This guy was completely...” Ingram grinned as he gaze at Blackmore. “A bully.”

“Ohh.”

“I wasn’t that bad,” Blackmore pleaded.

“Weren’t you a gangster working for a private money lender?”

“What...?”

Blackmore dropped his head.

Jeremy couldn’t help shaking his head. Crockta nodded in agreement. Then he whispered to Jeremy, “A bully, a gangster.”

“...Ugh.” Jeremy struck Crockta with his elbow.

“All he knew was how to fight and how to wield a spear, and that was all he did in Chesswood.”

“I didn’t do too badly.”

“Blackmore became notorious in Chesswood. He was a called a cruel bastard, a man with no feelings.”

Under the full moon, Ingram treated the two humans and one orc to his homemade beer. The taste was quite good. Crockta thought it was comparable to the beer that he drank in Orcrox.

“I regret it,” Blackwood said.

“Yes, I didn’t hear from you after you left Chesswood. So how did you become a minstrel?”

Blackmore's explanation wasn't long.

After leaving Chesswood, he wandered from place to place. With his skills, there was work wherever he went. He worked as a mercenary, a soldier, an escort, and various other things, but there was always regret in his heart. He made money from people's suffering.

Then by chance, he saw a minstrel playing at a pub. The minstrel's skills weren't that great, but he saw people laughing and having fun. Blackmore was eating expensive food in a room that was much more expensive than theirs, but he seemed more unhappy.

Thus, he abandoned everything and became a minstrel. That was 10 years ago.

"The most emotionless person is doing the most sentimental job in the world."

Blackmore laughed bitterly, "Isn't it because of that child?"

"....."

Blackmore gulped down his beer and asked, "How is she?"

"Married."

“To who?”

“A decent person.”

“Then that’s fine. Say no more.”

Blackmore also seemed to have his own story of heartbreak. His mood became so heavy that Ingram, Crockta, and Jeremy couldn’t open their mouths. Blackmore changed the topic and spoke, “The people cursed by the stars keep coming?”

“Yes, it’s serious. I tried to ask for help but...”

The villages united to block the attacks of those cursed by the stars, but it was getting harder.

Crockta’s eyes sunk. This area must’ve been designated as a hunting ground to level up, with the areas distributed between different clans. It was rare for NPCs with high levels to be scattered around villages like these. There were also no professional guards.

The best hunting ground. In addition, the clans would be controlling the hunting grounds in order to monopolize it.

“Tomorrow, the Chesswood village leaders have decided to meet to discuss the problem,” Ingram said.

Blackmore continued to drink before rising from his seat. “Uncle, I have become a minstrel, so I will sing you a song. However, my instrument is broken.”

“Hoh, is it a song that you made?”

“That’s right. I missed this place, so I made a song for Chesswood.”

“If it’s terrible, then I’ll stop listening straight away.”

“Of course.”

Then Blackmore started to sing. Unlike Ingram’s worries, it was a wonderful melody. The introductory part was strangely sad, but then it became more exciting.

The audience clapped in time with him. As they listened to the lyrics, they felt like they were the narrator rejoicing as he ran towards his hometown.

“I have travelled to many places in the world, always looking for new things. But I realized something. I had already found the things that I was looking for.”

“.....”

“Dancing under the moonlight, singing in the rain. Oh! I’m

happy to be back home! Laughing under the sun, running along different trails. Ah! I'm happy to be back home!"

Chapter 43 – WATER (2)

Chesswood was an area where dozens of small villages were scattered like squares on a chessboard. It was usually just called Chesswood, but the inhabitants of Chesswood liked to differentiate their villages from each other. It was like lines splitting each village apart.

There was a subtle fight of pride between them.

“I heard that in Cactus Village, your bull gave birth to twin calves?”

“So you’ve already heard. Both of them are very strong, hahahat.”

“But there is something funny, as in my Dandelion Village, our cow gave birth to triplets. Cactus Village Chief, too small! Kelkelkel.”

“...Kuk. C-Congratulations. Ugh.”

These types of arguments happened often, even during a meeting of the village heads. This was the town hall at Edelweiss Village in the center of Chesswood. Representatives from each village gathered for the meeting.

Once the leaders of the villages gathered, sometimes the atmosphere could get rough.

“As I said, our Gold Village’s ‘Come Back Taicondero’ will win.

“How funny, that isn’t even close. Our Natasha Village’s ‘Youth Rain’ will make you pee when you hear it.”

“You say such pretty words. Do you want to duel with me?”

“Ha! I am James. Do you want to make me an active volcano? Challenge me to a duel? Let’s go! Ha!”

“Okay, I’ll slam your ugly face with my sweet serenade. Gather the audience!”

The village chiefs of the Gold Village and Natasha Village growled at each other. They were on the brink of a brutal song showdown in Chesswood’s traditional Colosseum, where the losing singer’s life was at risk.

Crockta and Jeremy shook their heads as they watched. “Can these people fight?”

“.....”

The people of Chesswood weren’t fighters! It was understandable why Blackmore, who once worked for a money lender, was the object of fear. Blackmore, who wielded weapons like the Chesswood people sang their songs, would’ve looked like a demon.

“Everybody be quiet! We shouldn’t be fighting among ourselves!”

Ingram, Blackmore’s uncle, calmed everyone down. He was a normal farmer these days, but he was still respected by people as the former chief.

“They’re attacking us because we’re scattered and easier to defeat.”

“What benefits will they gain from killing us?”

“The enemies are those cursed by the stars. They are trying to kill us for their achievement points.”

“What? They can build up achievements, even if they do evil?”

“Hah... They really are cursed people.”

A user’s achievements points didn’t depend on them doing good or evil. As long as they did things that affected the world of Elder Lord, it would accumulate proportionately. Furthermore, killing NPCs were a great help in the growth of skills. Although it was expressed as achievement points, their aim was to acquire experience to raise their skill level.

The various clans were trying to raise their power in Chesswood.

“I sent people to the castle but...it will take time...”

“We can’t wait for them.”

“What do we do?”

“How about collecting money from the villages and hiring some mercenaries?”

The chiefs were troubled. They used farm equipment and hunting tools to prevent the users’ attacks, but the enemy was gradually becoming stronger.

Crockta also closed his eyes and thought hard.

High level users were gradually appearing to help their clans. Chesswood would be swept away. He only planned to get rid of the Thawing Balhae Clan but he was troubled by Chesswood’s situation. It wasn’t easy to distinguish between enemies.

It was at that moment.

“Everyone! It is serious!”

The door to the meeting room opened.

“Theres currently a massive attack on Dandelion Village...!”

“What?”

The leader of Dandelion Village, who had boasted of the triplet calves, jumped to his feet.

Crockta confirmed the direction based on the map attached to the town hall’s wall, and Dandelion Village was in one of the outlying areas. If he compared it to a checkerboard, it was one of the corner positions.

“I’ll go right now!”

“Have you told Chrysanthemum and Camellia Village?”

“Yes! Support is coming from the nearby villages!”

The chiefs tried to rush out straight away, but Ingram calmed everyone down.

“It would be better if we don’t go right away!”

“Then what should we do?”

“Let’s discuss some countermeasures first.”

“What about Dandelion Village?”

The meeting room fell into a mess. Then someone spoke, “I will go to Dandelion Village, so you should stay here and establish some countermeasures.”

It was Blackmore, who was sitting in a corner with Crockta and Jeremy. The meeting room fell silent as he spoke.

“Blackmore...!”

“It was true that you returned.”

“Oh my god.”

The infamous Blackmore made them even more nervous! Crockta and Jeremy could guess what Blackmore was like in the past just by their expressions. Then Blackmore said.

“I’ve washed my hands, and now I would just like to help the villages. As the representatives of Chesswood, you should develop measures for Chesswood’s protection. Isn’t that your role?”

“.....!”

Blackmore spoke solemnly. The chiefs nodded.

“Indeed... We won’t be a big help if we go now.”

“If Blackmore goes, then he can get rid of all of them.”

“Indeed, he is a great fighter.”

He was terrifying when he was an enemy, but more reassuring than anyone else when he was an ally. The chiefs felt relief that Blackmore was fighting for them.

“Would you like to help?”

Blackmore asked Crockta and Jeremy. He had already experienced the combat power of the two victims.

“I understand.”

Crockta nodded.

“I have already decided to help this brother.” Jeremy also agreed.

The three men who met on the road were now heading to Dandelion Village for Chesswood’s protection.

The three of them borrowed horses. Crockta didn’t know how to ride a horse, but Blackmore and Jeremy helped him. While it was

very hard for the horse to carry his heavy body, there was no time to care. They needed to save Dandelion Village first.

“Over there!”

They arrived at Dandelion Village, the battle there already in full swing. A huge number of users were gathered and slaughtering the villagers.

“.....!”

Blackmore’s face stiffened, his face distorting. It was an evil expression that was hard to believe for the minstrel who had always been smiling. He was carrying a spear on his back. He instantly jumped down from his horse.

He swung his spear and swept the users away, his spear moving like a storm. Extremely deadly!

Crockta and Jeremy belatedly got off their horses and participated in the fight. The three of them shook up the battlefield.

“Bul’tar————!”

The orc’s battle cry rang out. Crockta charged, causing users to fly through the air as his greatsword sliced apart the bodies of users. Their upper bodies were split in half and their guts spilled out.

The momentum could often decide victory in a war. Crockta kept yelling out battle cries to trample on the enemy's morale.

“I'll slice you to pieces————!”

Then he kicked aside the bodies parts and scattered flesh. The sight of a blood-covered orc warrior wielding a greatsword filled the users with fear.

Crockta roared, “Kuaaaaaah————!”

A true butcher of the battlefield! Blood spurted everywhere he went. The villagers, who were on the defensive, started to move forward as they became emboldened by Blackmore and the orc warrior's appearance.

Blackmore and Crockta jumped and slaughtered users everywhere they went. White particles shone all around them. There was no mercy in their attacks.

Some frightened users turned around and started to run away.

“This bastard!” A user ran over to Jeremy, wielding a sword.

Did he look easy? But Jeremy's sword moved like the wind and pierced the user's neck.

“Life is real, cursed brother.”

“Kuoooooh...”

The skills were excellent. Jeremy pulled out his sword and started running around. There were sacrifices, but the villages started to gradually gain the advantage. The battle centered around the activities of the three men.

“Brother! Have strength!” Jeremy shouted.

Crockta was in the middle of punishing a spear user. The user tried to attack the families’ members hiding in the warehouse, but Crockta appeared and took care of it at once. The residents sighed with relief. One mother was holding a crying baby in her arms.

“Dirty bastards.”

Crockta immediately ran out of the warehouse and scanned the situation. There was a group of users, which were his next target. The moment that Crockta was about to rush over, he was suddenly blown away by an unseen force.

Crockta rolled around on the ground as he was struck by a skill.

“Ugh!”

“An orc suddenly appeared?” A man asked as he approached

Crockta.

Crockta instinctively felt that he was strong. He got up quickly and restored his breathing. The man was wearing expensive equipment. It was reminiscent of the high level user Crockta met on the Arnin Plains in the past, but this user was on a completely different level.

The users shouted.

“Higashi came! Ranker! A ranker came to help!”

“Bugilma!”

“Bulgima came to help!”

Ranker. They were the top 500 influential users in Elder Lord.

Considering the enormous population of the world that was playing Elder Lord, being in the top 500 was truly known as the peak. Elder Sage Corporation provided them with benefits and they were treated as a star.

Higashi was a ranker. Crockta felt despair as a sense of pressure that he had never felt before manifested.

“This place now seems fun.”

Higashi smiled as he held his sword and shield.

Crockta looked around. Blackmore and Jeremy also seemed to be fighting high level users. The critical people were marked.

The users' morale rose at Higashi's appearance and they started attacking the villagers with renewed vigor. The villages collapsed under the swords and Users laughed happily as they slaughtered random people.

Crockta's eyes flashed.

“Hey Orc. Your opponent is me.”

But Higashi didn't let him leave. Crockta clenched his greatsword.

The weight of being a ranker wasn't small. Their skills, skill levels, and equipment were all high levelled. Crockta moved slowly to look for gaps, but Higashi also moved in tandem to maintain his distance.

Higashi moved first. His body appeared in front of Crockta as if space had folded. It was too close to swing his greatsword.

“.....!”

The shield strongly pushed against Crockta. He blocked it with

his greatsword, but his sight was momentarily covered by the shield. He couldn't anticipate where the sword would move beyond the shield.

Crockta threw himself to the ground and rolled his body.

“Hoh.”

He got up while covered in dirt. Higashi looked at Crockta and turned his blade round and round.

“If you were a little late than you would've been stung. Your judgment is fast. “

“.....”

The connection between sword and shield was excellent. It was a real battle. Indeed, it is clear that Higashi did martial arts. He might be the strongest opponent Higashi had fought so far.

Crockta gathered all of the strength in his body.

[Indomitable Fighting Spirit (Rare) has been used.]

[Tattoos of Honour (Rare) has been used.]

[Leyteno's Greatsword Technique (Rare) will exert an extreme performance.]

His senses sharpened. A faint steam rose from his greatsword. The skill proficiency of Leyteno's Greatsword Technique had temporarily risen. It wasn't a situation where he should conserve his stamina.

[Mind's Eye's (Special) has opened.]

Mind's Eye opened.

Powerful.

Higashi approached. Thanks to Mind's Eye, Higashi's movements seemed a little clearer, but Crockta felt heavier. He could see the strength of the enemy more clearly.

“Bul'tar.”

Crockta muttered. He had to fight while being prepared for death. It was at that moment that he saw something else thanks to Mind's Eye.

“.....!”

Someone was hiding in the village. The shape of the person using stealth was dimly visible. Crockta retreated as he stared in that direction.

“.....?”

Higashi was confused.

[Mind's Eye's (Special) has penetrated through the Stealth skill.]

Crockta could see the faint figure of a woman wearing leather and a mask. The woman was standing next to a building and shooting this scene. This outfit was familiar. Her face had never been revealed, but her character was well known from her videos, like a trademark.

She spread the wicked deeds of users and announced their names. The Youvidser who had shot Crockta in the past.

It was Laney.

Chapter 44 – SMOKE (1)

Higashi didn't let Crockta think for any longer, charging over straight away. Crockta defended while his head was busily brainstorming.

Think. He had to think.

He staggered as he was hit by the shield again. Higashi struck with not only his sword, but with his shield as well. Crockta concentrated on thinking as he avoided Higashi's attacks.

How would he win this war?

He swung his greatsword, which bounced off the shield. The attack was filled with momentum, but Higashi's shield didn't move. Rather, Crockta was kicked and rolled across the ground.

He scanned the battlefield as he struggled to get up. Blackmore and Jeremy were being simultaneously pressured by several users. In the first place, this was a war caused by the clan for their own purposes. Their numbers would gradually increase.

In the other clans, there might be really strong users like Higashi. Crockta's power alone was insufficient to protect Chesswood.

Crockta once again squinted at Laney. Even if he lost the battle, he had to win the war.

Crockta's mindset had already returned to the Raven of the past as he focused on the most efficient method of winning. If his chances of victory were slim to none, he should struggle to get the most out of the situation. In order to do that, he would crawl on the ground to make it possible.

Anyway, he couldn't win this battle. The number of users kept increasing, and even Jeremy was now trying to escape from the battle. Blackmore was also gradually becoming conscious of the rear. They would soon have to retreat.

Crockta closed his eyes as he heard the screams of the villagers.

“What? Are you giving up?” Higashi asked.

Crockta laughed instead of answering.

‘Yes, look at me, Higashi. Take a look at me, Laney.

If there is to be a fight, then I'll give you a hard time. Look at me.’

Laney rapidly gained fame after uploading the fight between the orc and the user hunters. Now her Youvids channel had tens of thousands of people visiting a day.

The reason she did this was insignificant.

She didn't like bad people and she also got money. She was able to earn money from upsetting the villains. That's all it was. Laney wanted to distort the faces of those using dirty tricks while trying to avoid the eyes of others.

It worked better than she thought, and she was now a famous Youvidser.

Reports from other people also increased. There was a piece of information that caught her eyes.

The famous Thawing Balhae and other big clans were gathering in one area. Furthermore, they started to control the access of other users. Those who didn't belong to the clans were forced out by their threats.

The name of the area was Chesswood.

It was well known that clans would slaughter weak NPCs for their own benefit. There was a lot of talk about this in the Elder Lord community, but it was the first time in Elder Lord that they tried to rule an area and exclude others on such a large scale.

Laney's senses tingled. She wanted to reveal disgusting actions.

She hated the big clans. They used their size to nurture rankers and raise the clan. If the former rankers enjoyed the fantasy life of

Elder Lord, the newest rankers were just mechanical users fostered to make money.

It stunk. She went to learn what was happening in Chesswood. Her class was the hidden piece called Shadow Assassin, and it was a character that specialized in hiding in the shadows. No one noticed her.

When she first arrived, nothing had happened. It was an ordinary village. The special point was that all of the villagers loved singing and didn't know how to fight. It was a village where the residents welcomed travelers and lived without locking their doors.

But Laney had accused users and she knew how dangerous this could be. The clans would erase the Chesswood area in order to raise the level of the clan members. The users entered Chesswood disguised as travelers, dividing sections of Chesswood among themselves.

But Laney was distressed. Could she really file a complaint about this? The clans were gathering and killing NPCs, disturbing the balance of Elder Lord. But was this really something that people would consider a crime? Would they respect NPCs who weren't users?

She didn't know. So she just continued shooting mechanically. Her idea was to watch until the end.

Then the full-scale attack of the clans began. Laney was able to

find a black bandana that she had seen somewhere before.

“Bul’tar————!”

“.....!”

He had changed, but it was the same bandana. An old bandana with the mark of the Blacksmith Company on it. He was bigger, and there were tattoos all over his body, but he was the same orc.

He appeared and started to fight for the villagers. The battle turned against the users in an instant. He was like an incarnation of the battlefield as he ruthlessly swung his greatsword and cut down the users. There was a fountain of blood every time he moved his greatsword.

However, it was only for a while. Within a few minutes, the Yamato Clan’s vice-leader, ranker Higashi appeared. He and the other high level users had joined to help the clan members. He was the main force of the Yamato clan.

The orc and Higashi fought. At first, the orc fought enthusiastically, but was eventually pushed back by the difference in power. Higashi effortlessly suppressed the orc.

After Higashi appeared, the situation changed again. The residents resisting the users were broken, and the men helping along with the orc gradually retreated. But the orc wielded his greatsword till the very end.

“Ugh!”

Higashi’s one-handed sword sliced the orc’s thigh. The orc fell to his knees.

“Why don’t you run like your colleagues?”

“.....”

The orc didn’t answer. He raised his body using his greatsword. The two people clashed again.

The orc’s greatsword reached Higashi’s neck, but Higashi blocked it with his shield. The greatsword was deflected, revealing the orc’s abdomen that Higashi’s sword instantly sliced apart. Blood gushed out.

The orc grabbed his abdomen.

“I’ll give you an opportunity. If you run away now, then I won’t chase you.” Higashi twirled his one-handed sword as he walked up to the orc. “Orc, why do you need to die for the humans over there?”

Higashi shrugged. Now the battle was over, and the only thing left was the massacre. The villagers couldn’t resist and were becoming the users’ experience. In addition, those with weapons

kept joining the battle.

“Yes, even your allies ran away.”

Laney filmed all of this. She wondered what the orc would answer.

But he never opened his mouth and continued the meaningless fight.

The orc rushed back. There were wounds all over his body. He was bloody. He tried to resist Higashi, but his body didn't listen.

“Now this is just disgusting, you bastard!” Higashi cried out.

During the fight, the orc slashed at one of Higashi's arms. It wasn't a big wound, but Higashi's face distorted. He swung his sword with a fierce momentum and hit the orc, who flew through the air.

It was towards Laney's location. She hurriedly moved her body. The orc hit the wall where she had been standing by and rolled to the floor. Blood stained the wall. The orc crouched on the ground and used the greatsword to raise his body up. It seemed like it was harder for him to stand.

Laney felt an unknown emotion. What caused the orc to keep standing up?

She recalled the voice of the orc in the past video that she shot.

‘Where are the people who know honor?’

Higashi approached and said, “I definitely gave you a chance to get away. You have chosen death, you stupid orc.”

His sword raised itself high in the sky to deal the final blow. The blade glinted in the sun.

The silent orc finally opened his mouth.

“You, is that right?”

“What?”

The orc raised his gaze. It was an intense gaze.

“You.”

The orc straightened and raised his greatsword. He yet again took a step towards Higashi. The orc asked, “You, can you just turn around and run away as you see people being slaughtered for no reason?”

“.....!”

Laney felt like she had been hit with a hammer on the head at those words.

Higashi's face distorted. "What are you saying now, you bastard!"

"You don't understand." The orc grinned through his bloody face. "It is you who is stupid, not me."

"Hah."

Higashi grinned and looked at the sky and angrily wielded his sword. "This bastard!"

The orc blocked with his greatsword. Then the shield slammed into his torso. He rolled on the ground together with the shield. But the orc couldn't get on his feet again. Higashi walked towards him with a face that was red with anger.

He intended to really finish this. But Higashi was forced to stop moving.

At that moment. A woman suddenly appeared beside the orc. A masked woman wearing black clothes that clung to her body appeared.

Laney, it was her.

Higashi was unable to move because he was wary of the unknown strength he felt from her.

“Who?”

Laney didn't answer. Instead, she spoke to the orc. “Hey.”

The eyes of the fallen orc turned towards her. “...You?”

“There is no need to know who I am.”

The orc stood up again. However, it seemed like it was difficult to raise his body due to the accumulated damage to his body. In the end, the orc stretched out on the ground. Laney raised her palm in a gesture for Higashi not to approach and asked the orc again.

“Why are you fighting? It is a dog's death.”

Laney couldn't understand it. The orc, Crockta laughed. Crockta squeezed out all the power in his body and got up again.

[It wouldn't be unusual for your broken body to die right away.]

[Nevertheless, you keep getting back up.]

[I pay homage to your spirit.]

[Indomitable Fighting Spirit (Rare) has been upgraded to Combative Spirit (Essence).]

“Only humans worry about such calculations.”

Crockta raised his greatsword and gestured to Laney to move. Laney turned sideways.

This was the last one. Higashi was in front of them. Just before he charged forward, Crockta whispered to Laney.

“A warrior doesn’t yield to injustice.”

That was one of the laws of a warrior that he heard from Lenox, an oath that he had sworn to uphold.

Laney didn’t answer. It was no longer necessary to talk. Crockta glared at Higashi. It was time to end this. Crockta squeezed out his remaining strength to deliver a battle cry.

“An honorable death is better than a craven life————!”

His roar shook the area.

Crockta ran forward. Higashi, who had paused at Laney's appearance, also got ready for the final clash. The two rushed at the same time.

At that moment, Laney reached out and hit the back of Crockta's neck.

“.....!”

Neat work! Crockta collapsed. Laney grabbed Crockta's huge body.

“What?”

Higashi hesitated. He felt like Laney was a tough opponent and had been wary since she appeared. Laney just sighed. She cast a Shadow Assassin skill.

[Shadow Escape (Essence) has been used.]

[It can't be used for another 168 hours.]

Laney and Crockta's bodies started blurring. They were like a shadow as they became translucent and disappeared, completely

gone from the previous scene. Laney's body appeared far away from Dandelion Village.

“Aigoo, aigoo. Ah, why did I do that? What's going on?”

Laney grabbed her head. It was an impulsive behavior.

As she was groaning, Crockta was snuck a peek at Laney from the ground, smiling with satisfaction.

That's right.

He actually wasn't knocked out! Laney was strong, but that wasn't enough to make an orc faint. He just pretended to be stunned. He didn't know that she had such a miraculous skill, but he was able to achieve the result that he wanted.

Had she filmed it?

Crockta smiled before hurriedly closing his eyes and pretending to be stunned as Laney glanced over him. Laney's lamenting continued. A man had to resort to trickery to grab her heart!

If he asked for help, then Laney would've ignored him. Instead, he showed the tragic image of a warrior who was about to die. Even if she didn't help, Crockta would lose nothing. He was a user. He could live again. He didn't care about death.

In the first place, what he was trying to save wasn't his own life.

He wanted Laney's help with Chesswood's plight.

In order to win the war, he needed to use everything in his favor.

Chapter 45 – SMOKE (2)

It was a strange day.

“Hmm...”

Kim Chuljung, the middle-aged sales manager, smoked a cigarette on his way home from work.

Today, he felt a strange sense of separation from the world, as if he was different from the world around him. It was a subtle emotion that made him suddenly look back at himself. These days, the behavior of new employees sometimes embarrassed him.

This was the flow of time. Kim Chuljung thought about the routine of his company as he put out his cigarette and prepared to leave the alley.

At the corner where he was standing, a group of students were smoking on the other side. Despite wearing uniforms, they showed no signs of hesitation. They noticed Kim Chuljung, but the children didn't care and lit up the cigarettes anyways.

“...Hah.”

Kim Chuljung stepped closer to the children. “Students, you're all kid wearing school uniforms, so can you really smoke like this?”

They glanced at each other before looking back at Kim Chuljung. They started to giggle. “Who cares, Ahjussi. We’re smoking cigarettes that we bought with our own money.”

“These guys...”

“A meddler has come, how lame.”

“Pfft! What a funny bastard.”

The students echoed their slang amongst themselves as they laughed.

“He smells like cigarettes; that’s why he’s so bald.”

“Let’s go. Dirty, dirty.”

“.....!”

They walked past Kim Chuljung and started to leisurely stroll somewhere else. Not one of them put out their cigarettes. They smoked in the streets as they headed to some place only they knew. Kim Chuljung stared at their backs. He once again felt an unknown feeling.

It was an era where virtual reality games were popular, cars moved on their own, and artificial organs were being transplanted. The world was changing.

“Hmm...”

He pointed out students smoking and was treated like a meddler. Actually, that wasn't the case. It was just that he was old-fashioned.

Kim Chuljung smiled bitterly and started walking. But today's strange day didn't let him go.

An excited child was running and bumped into Kim Chuljung before falling down. Kim Chuljung grabbed the child; however, the ice cream that the child was holding had spilled onto Kim Chuljung's clothes.

“This...” Kim Chuljung laughed bitterly. The child gasped and watched Kim Chuljung with fear. “This guy, you shouldn't run around on the streets.”

“.....”

“If you make a mistake, then you should say sorry.”

“Mother!” A young woman came running over. She quickly figured out what happened between her child and Kim Chuljung, sweeping her child into her arms. “Are you okay?”

“Yes.”

“This ahjussi didn’t do anything bad to you?”

Kim Chuljung was outraged. “What are you saying?”

“The world is rough.”

“My pants, do you see it? If a child makes a mistake, then their parents should apologize.”

“What did my child do? Don’t you know how to do laundry?”

“Hah...”

The young woman took her child away before Kim Chuljung could answer. Kim Chuljung was left alone, feeling that unknown emotion as he headed home. His common sense wasn’t the common sense of the world anymore.

He came back home, but no one welcomed him. Instead, only the faces in the family photos hanging in the living room smiled at him. He was the father of a flock of wild geese.

As a middle-aged man who went back and forth from his company, he had worked hard since he was young. He reached the position of a manager, but now he had to prepare for retirement. He only occasionally heard the voices of his wife and children over the phone.

The things that happened today made him even more lonely. It was a day where he found nothing to live for, so he couldn't help but feel overwhelmed.

He sat on the couch and turned on the television. The screen flashed in the living room. Today's topic, a video of Elder Lord, was being played. His sunken eyes stared at it. It was a video from the famous Youvidser called Laney.

“...Oh, this.”

He felt that emotion that he had been feeling all day again. No matter how much the world had changed, why was such a horrible sight still occurring?

Those who were called giant clans were slaughtering the inhabitants of a village. They were game characters, but the way they were crying and begging for their lives looked more real than actual reality. If someone had a human conscience, how could they stab women and children, just because they were artificial intelligences?

Why was it good to kill those known as NPCs? As someone who once played Elder Lord enthusiastically, Kim Chuljung was well aware of how lifelike the NPCs were.

Suddenly, the focus of the video moved. The scene of the massacre moved to the side. Now it wasn't a human in the center of the screen. It was an orc who most people thought of as

monsters. The orc was persistently resisting the users who killed the NPCs. His body became bloody as he kept falling to the ground and rising again to defend the villagers.

The humans were monsters while the monster was acting human, a paradoxical sight!

Kim Chuljung sighed.

The orc seemed to balance on the edge between life and death, but he never actually died. He swung his greatsword. Kim Chuljung felt something stir in his chest as the orc never gave up until the end.

What made this orc fight like that?

-You, is that right?

The orc was talking.

-You.

In Kim Chuljung's eyes, he was a bloody hero.

-You, can you just turn around and run away as you watch people being slaughtered for no reason?

Kim Chuljung unconsciously rose from his spot. The breathing of the person filming became rough as they felt the same thing as Kim Chuljung.

The video recorder intervened. The voice of the recorder was a woman. She asked why the orc continued with the reckless fight. The orc smiled like it was natural.

-Only humans worry about such calculations.

He whispered.

-A warrior doesn't yield to injustice.

Fighting to the end against injustice.

It was an old-fashioned idea. The orc was a really old-fashioned man. He was like an antique, as most middle-aged men these days ended up buying sports cars. In this age where heroic beliefs only belonged in history, it was rare to find such a person. But heroes had died and left their names behind.

The orc and the ranker rushed at each other and the video ended. Kim Chuljung didn't move. He stood there for a while, wondering about this emotion. It was strange, but it was always present inside of him.

He thought for a while. Kim Chuljung opened his eyes. They were no longer the weary eyes of a middle-aged man going about

his daily routine. It was the eyes of a passionate man.

Kim Chuljung muttered, “I forgot.”

He headed to the empty room that used to belong to his son. There was one capsule to access Elder Lord. After becoming distant with his family, it was something he had used to relieve the loneliness. Dust had piled up because he hadn’t used it for a while.

“Men are wine.”

It was the moment that the sales manager Kim Chuljung, no, the worst necromancer, Iron, returned to Elder Lord.

“Yo, man! Wassup, man!”

“Hey, long time no see! Whoa. Good to see you again!”

“Me too Bro! Hey come inside!”

Joseph and Bob embraced each other in the natural manner of Americans. The members had gathered at Bob’s house.

Joseph, Bob, Elia, and Gary.

They were old friends and had been partners since their youth. They enjoyed an old hobby that only a few people remembered these days.

TRPG! They rolled the dice and tackled all types of adventures in an imaginary world. They were dragon slayers hunting dragons, heroes who saved the world, and sometimes demons who destroyed the world.

But times changed, and there were now virtual reality games. As the medium to achieve their imagination appeared, their area of activity gradually became the virtual reality game. In that place, they boasted the best roleplay.

That's right. They were widely known in the American community as intrinsic roleplayers. Bob's home had four virtual reality connection capsules placed side-by-side.

Before connection, they had a light snack time as they discussed what to do for the day.

“Hey, I found an interesting video.”

“What is it?”

“Look.”

Bob opened his tablet and the video was played. It was from the Youvidser called Laney. Due to the advanced interpreter skill, they

could understand the videos of other countries without any problems.

“Hmm...”

None of them could open their mouths. The video was shocking. The clans slaughtered the NPCs, but an orc appeared and fought against them like a hero. An unbreakable spirit that fought against injustice!

Bob looked at the eyes of his friends in turn. After a long time together, they knew what Bob was trying to say. Gary nodded.

“The theme of the day is the endangered village and the four warriors that saved it?”

“Not bad.”

They laughed. Elia asked, “But that orc, is he alive?”

They couldn't verify it in the video. However, death was a strong possibility. But Bob's expression was bright.

“That is what we will check.”

“If he died?”

“The four warriors will maintain his role.”

Bob rose from his seat.

“How far is Chesswood?”

“Let’s see.”

“I’ll prepare my buff right away.”

They entered the capsules. The Elder Road roleplaying crew that anyone in the RPG community would recognize, F4! They moved into the world of Elder Lord.

A man checked the Internet forums. A new post appeared. He clicked on it.

[Title: Brothers, the time has come.

Brothers, everyone would have seen that video. My hands are trembling as I write this.

Our compatriot is spilling his blood. He is struggling alone in order to prevent their evil deeds. I don’t think there was any

brother who didn't tremble at the sight.

It is time to let those dirty humans know who we are.

I am heading there now.

I leave some space for my brothers.]

It wasn't long but the comments were overwhelming. The man confirmed the comments. As expected, they were all passionate.

↳ I'm going. Let's go!

↳ I will participate. Dirty clans!

↳ Go! We have to punish the wicked!

↳ I'm going. Let's leave our mark on the world.

↳ I will say two words. Come, Brothers!

↳ Morals! Assault!

↳ (View more)

A smile flashed on the man's face. As expected from his brothers. He was also unable to tolerate it after watching the video. He declared his participation in the comment input window.

↳ Number 1 Orc User Maguchwi: I am going!!! Come Brothers!!! Shout Bul'tar!!!!

Since the launch of Elder Lord, he was someone who started as a orc and spread the talent and honor of orcs, the number 1 orc magician who loved orcs more than anyone else, Maguchwi!

And the secret orc users community he ran, 'Orc Users Brotherhood'!

Maguchwi and his brothers started running towards Chesswood.

The road leading to Chesswood.

Gordon's wagon was carrying a group of people heading towards Chesswood. Chesswood wasn't a bustling place, but there were those who wanted to relocate because it was simple and peaceful. A single family and their luggage were on the wagon.

The great weather, the shipping costs he received, and the thought of meeting Madame Rachel at the pub meant he would soon arrive at Chesswood. In many ways, this was a great day. Thus, he let out an enthusiastic greeting as he discovered travelers

on the road.

“Hey! Hello!”

They saw Gordon. The group seemed to be heading to Chesswood.

“It’s good to see you. I am called Gordon. Hey guys, are you heading to Chesswood? It might be narrow, but do you guys want a ride?”

“.....”

“Oh, it isn’t expensive. How about it? Your legs must hurt.”

The travelers started talking among themselves. Gordon grinned. Travelers always had a lot of suspicions, but he was an honest coachman, so he didn’t think to cheat them.

“It is one silver for one person. That is a good bargain.”

Then he hummed. The sun was bright and the wind was good, so the melody couldn’t help emerging. The travelers consulted each other and nodded.

“Okay. It is five silver for five people.”

Gordon stopped his wagon and held out his hand. The man who seemed to be the representative approached Gordon and extended his hand.

“Thank you...”

But he gave Gordon a punch, not money.

“Aigoo!”

Gordon rolled off the wagon. He couldn't understand the sudden attack. Gordon groaned from his position on the ground.

“Kuock, what is this?!”

“.....”

The travelers laughed.

“I was bored on the way, so this is great.”

The white stars on their foreheads were faintly shining.

“Kill all those inside. We will take this wagon and join the clan.”

“I understand.”

Their conversation shocked Gordon. “What is this... Wicked...!”

“Why are you surprised?” The man laughed. “Is this the first time you’ve seen those cursed by the stars?”

Gordon gulped at the words. He just had to meet these bad people at this time. He tried to get up but was kicked by the man again. Gordon crouched on the ground. He thought that it was a great day, but it was actually the opposite.

“Kuuack...”

“Wait here. There must be people inside.”

The man left the party and entered the wagon. As expected, there was a family surrounded by luggage. They didn’t know what was going on and stared blankly at the man. Someone who was clearly a NPC asked, “Who is it? Have we already arrived?”

“Yes.”

Then he pulled out a knife. “You’ve arrived in hell.” The man grinned. The NPCs freaked out. The mother rushed to protect her kids, while the father spread out his hands.

It was a great sight.

“W-We have nothing. Only our lives...”

“Your lives are enough.”

“Please, the children...”

“Everybody come out.”

The NPCs obeyed. Elder Lord was too realistic, so it was more enjoyable. As the man smiled and pulled them out of the luggage compartment,

“Kuaaaaah!”

A scream was heard.

“What, they’re done already?” The man asked. It seemed like the driver was killed. The man tried to continue his actions without a care in the world. But then another scream was heard.

“Keeook!”

“Keeok!”

“.....”

The man’s face stiffened. Something was strange. That was the

voice of his party member. He hurriedly left the compartment and looked in the direction of the driver.

“.....!”

He couldn't believe his eyes. All of his companions had turned into white particles. All four people had died. They weren't at a level where they could be easily beaten, as there was a mixture of high level users raised by the clan.

The man moved his gaze.

Gordon was looking at him from over the bodies of his party members, a sharp sword brightly gleaming in his hand. As the man looked stunned, Gordon laughed and swept away the long bangs.

“.....!”

The man's mouth gaped open. There was a white star shining on Gordon's forehead. The man flinched back. Gordon waved the tip of his sword and approached. He had an unimaginably cruel expression on his face.

“Why are you surprised?”

Gordon laughed coldly.

“Is this the first time you've seen a roleplayer?”

Chapter 46 – A FIRE IN THE SKY (1)

The chiefs decided to hold the battle at Edelweiss Village in Chesswood in an attempt to face the clans who were dividing and occupying the area. The response was swift. The clans joined together, but the residents were locked in the center of Chesswood and had built a form line of defense.

“Orc brother should act more moderately,” Jeremy said.

“I’m okay.”

“Then don’t fight so crudely.”

Jeremy and Blackmore had retreated safely from the battle of Dandelion Village, but Crockta had fought until the end. He had barely managed to escape thanks to Laney, and now all of Chesswood knew his name. The orc warrior who risked his life fighting for them!

Jeremy’s eyes had turned red because he had thought Crockta was dead until he returned. He acted grumpy but was surprisingly cheerful.

Laney had disappeared. Crockta thought that she was probably somewhere filming this very scene.

The video she uploaded got an explosive reaction.

The Internet's public opinion had now turned against the clans, including the Thawing Balhae Clan. People were enthusiastic about the drama. The NPCs were inhabitants who couldn't fight the users massacring them, and the orc who fought for the people was a hero.

The end of the battle and the orc's fate was unknown, but there was the shared opinion of wanting to help Chesswood. There were those who actually went to Chesswood.

But Crockta didn't expect that much. In any case, the world was about victory. In the world of the strong, victory couldn't be achieved through public opinion and compassion alone. Even if some of them came to help, it wouldn't be enough to go against Thawing Balhae and the other clans.

Crcokta examined the defenses from a high place.

All of the villagers who could fight were gathered in Edelweiss Village. Now it was a siege. Outside of the village, the clan users seemed to be scouting this place. They were also gathering. They would destroy the village and then scatter after getting what they wanted. The big clans couldn't ignore the ongoing criticisms of the public.

"They are coming," a villager said.

Crockta and Jeremy looked in that direction. The armies of the clans were slowly approaching. Massive. There were many novice users, but there were also high level users with good equipment

scattered among them.

“They are coming from behind.” The other side also announced the approach of the clans.

Blackmore’s uncle, the former village chief, frowned. The enemies just now appearing were split into four groups, according to the words of Crockta the orc. They were trying to invade Edelweiss from four different directions.

Ingram was troubled. The villagers were far from combatants. Ingram looked over the village’s line of defense. Everyone was trying their best, but it couldn’t help but look shabby since they didn’t have professional training.

He called his nephew Blackmore and two others over.

“They came.”

Blackmore had a dark expression ever since he fought in the battle at Dandelion Village. He missed the peace of Chesswood and came back despite his past sins, only to find that the village was on the verge of collapse. He was forced to flee despite seeing many villagers killed in front of him.

Should he have fought to the end like the orc Crockta?

Ingram knew his heart and patted Blackmore’s shoulder. “Blackmore, Crockta, and Jeremy. Right now, you are the people

most familiar with fighting in the village.”

Crockta nodded.

Ingram continued, “The enemy is moving forward in four places. Take one direction each and fight there.”

“Is it really okay?” Crockta asked.

He wondered if it would be better to reduce the defense lines even further. The defense line could break if they fought in all four directions. Ingram shook his head.

“The residents have already lost so much.”

“.....”

“This is the last bastion. Please understand.”

It was for this reason that the people of Chesswood had gathered here. In the end, the villages that they threw away were burned and destroyed.

The villages of Chesswood included: the slaughtered Dandelion Village, Black Rose Village, Chrysanthemum Village, Cactus Village, Camellia Village, Daffodil, Saffron, Morning Glory, Sunflower, etc. They were all destroyed.

If the battle was pushed to Edelweiss, then they really wouldn't have anything left for them.

Crockta nodded at Ingram's determined face.

He was a user, so he often overlooked their hearts. For all of them, this was a real problem. Their nests were destroyed, their friends had died, and their families were slaughtered. It was a disaster without notice. Due to the selfishness of their enemies, they lost everything.

Crockta's eyes cooled. He had also lost important relationships due to the Thawing Balhae Clan. He completely understood their hearts. But if he was asked if they could win this fight, it would be difficult to answer. Crockta had barely come back alive, thanks to Laney. More powerful users like Higashi would appear.

The odds of success had increased to 1%, but they were still ridiculous odds. But he didn't give up.

Crockta touched the handle of his greatsword. The weight and grip of Ogre Slayer was now completely familiar in his hand.

Numerous people, people who didn't know how to fight, took up weapons to protect their homes and families. They couldn't even live again after death. Once their necks were sliced, they were gone from the world forever.

What about Crockta? How shameful would it be if he, a user,

gave up first. How could he step back in front of Ingram and Blackmore's determined faces?

"I understand."

Crockta turned his head. The villagers were nervous. The men held weapons and took deep breaths while the women tried to support them as much as possible. In the center were the children, the elderly, and the sick who were praying for the return of their families.

"Crockta, please take care of the southwest."

"Yes."

"Blackmore will take the northeast and..."

Jeremy, Blackmore, Ingram, and Crockta scattered in four different directions. The moment they wished each other luck, the alarm horn rang out.

"An attack! The attack has begun!"

"To your locations!"

"Go back to your locations!"

War.

They exchanged glances and ran to their assigned area. The villagers also ran to their respective locations, picking up their weapons and preparing for battle. Hastily fired arrows flew in the air towards the clan members; however, they were blocked by the opponent's defense wall, failing to cause damage.

On the other hand, flames appeared in the air and were launched towards the villagers' defense lines.

The magicians' bombardment!

There were those who could use magic on Chesswood's side, but they weren't raised for battle like the clans' users. One of the village chiefs who learned magic deployed a shield, but it was soon broken by the repeated bombardment of the users.

“Aaack!”

Those who were caught by the flames rolled across the ground. The flames spread. The arrows of the clan poured over the collapsed lines and the members rushed towards the residents.

He couldn't leave them alone.

Crockta pulled out his greatsword. The villagers were groaning from their injuries, some of them so terrified that they couldn't hold their weapons properly.

Crockta took a deep breath. War was dependent on morale. Crockta yelled towards the sky with all his might, just like a lion's roar.

“Bul'tarr—!”

A call that shook the battlefield! It was an intense battle cry that shook the earth and caused the whole army to flinch.

[Your roar filled with killing intent has terrified the army soldiers.]

[Your battle shout is now more than just a threat.]

[Rare grade skill, Crushing Roar (Rare) has been acquired.]

The message windows popped up. It seemed like a greater force was rising from his body. Crockta didn't capture it. Rather, he let it explode towards the enemy again.

“Show the cost of blood to the invaders—!”

The users blocked their ears at the ensuing roar. The shout was tremendous enough to shatter windows. It elicited fear in the enemies, and invoked an unbreakable fighting spirit in his allies.

The residents remembered how to hold their weapons thanks to Crockta's intense presence.

His battle cry. The enemies were invaders. They were demons that came to trample their homes, friends and families. No matter how unsophisticated the farmers, they realized that they would have to swing their fists. They needed to raise a sword towards those who wanted to kill their families.

The residents shouted in response to Crockta.

“Kill all the bastards!”

“Save the village and our families!”

“Chesswood is ours!”

The inhabitants sprinted towards the enemy, with Crockta leading the charge. Crockta was in the front as he hit the enemy's camp.

Their formations shook. Crockta's greatsword broke the army's formation. The enemies' heads flew and blood spurted. Crockta's battle shout once again crushed the enemy's morale.

“Bul'tarr—!”

Chesswood was better than he thought.

But objectively, the power difference was obvious.

Jeremy glanced around. He heard the cries of Crockta, the orc brother who was running around like crazy. He truly was too energetic. He was a monster who would continue to grow stronger in battle.

But that was a matter for over there.

“Not good...”

Jeremy stabbed his opponent's neck and stepped back.

This place was already a melee frenzy. It wasn't long before the enemies and allies mixed together. Gradually, the number of corpses increased. The eyes of the dead villagers were still filled with resentment towards the enemy.

“Dammit...”

He was only accompanying Crockta because of Derek, but he couldn't help being shaken by the awful sight. Those who were cursed by the stars.

“Disgusting scum...”

Jeremy wasn't a good man, he was well aware of this. He didn't have any sentimental aspects, and worked ultimately for his and Derek's benefits. But those guys were beyond wicked, like demons.

"Jane... Jane..."

One dying resident was calling the name of his lover. It was hopeless, since his body had been split apart at the waist. His hollow eyes captured Jeremy.

"Jane..."

"....."

It was that name.

Jane. Jeremy grasped his sword. He also knew a Jane, the name of an old lover. She was living well now. There were countless Janes in the world who were someone else's lover, just like this man loved a Jane.

That's it. Why did he feel dirty?

"Fuck."

He volunteered for nothing. He didn't follow Crockta. He felt too much when he was with this brother. Yes, just like that time.

When Hoyt and Crockta were standing together, Jeremy had felt an unknown feeling.

Boss Derek. The boss also felt this way for the first time.

What should Jeremy do? Those who were cursed by the stars were approaching. More residents on the front lines were dying. It was time to run away.

Why couldn't he take a step back? Jeremy looked back. Edelweiss Village was visible and the frightened faces of the children could be seen in the windows. He saw residents struggling even as they collapsed.

“Fuck.”

At that moment, Jeremy fell back from a strong shock. Jeremy barely caught himself in time. A man was visible. It was the man called Higashi, the one who brought Crockta to the brink of death. He was wearing dazzling and expensive armor while holding a sword and shield.

Jeremy whistled. “You came now. You're later, Brother.”

Higashi studied him with an unknown smile. “NPCs truly seem real.”

Those cursed by the stars called people a strange term, NPCs. He wasn't sure why, but Jeremy felt dirty every time he heard it.

There was a reason why they were called the cursed. They were cursed and committed bad deeds without any care in the world.

He wanted to ask. “Brother, I was wondering something.” Jeremy raised his sword. “Why are you attacking this place?”

He heard that it was for achievements, but it wasn’t funny that the cursed people were trying to get rid of their curse through evil deeds. They shouldn’t kill innocent people just to resolve their curse.

Higashi laughed. “It is annoying to explain, so just know this.”

“What is it?”

“If you understand how trivial the reason is, you will become angry.” Those with an artificial intelligence were really funny. They didn’t even know that they were born for the sake of humans playing a game. Higashi sniggered.

Jeremy saw Higashi’s smiling face. A trivial reason. ‘I see.’ Jeremy started laughing. He couldn’t help laughing. Higashi and Jeremy looked at each other and laughed.

“Yes, it is accurate. Even though I didn’t hear your reason, I can feel a fire burning inside me. It is already too hard to say how upset I am.” Jeremy said.

“What if the fire emerges?”

“What if.” At that moment, Jeremy moved like the wind. “I’m going to kill you, you fucker!”

“Hahahat!”

The two exchanged blows. Jeremy’s sword stabbed at Higashi’s gaps, but they were all blocked by the shield.

“Cough!”

Jeremy was wary of Higashi’s one handed sword, but ended up being hit by the shield. Jeremy flew into the air and rolled across the ground.

“Kuheok...”

So painful. How did that orc brother endure this? How did he endure such pain? Jeremy barely managed to raise his body. Blood flowed from his mouth. His body structure was too different from an orc. Jeremy smiled again as he looked at his sword and then shook it.

“You’re not running away? Like the previous time?” Higashi asked.

“Yes.”

He should run away but...

His body bent towards the front. He couldn't do this.

Why did he follow that orc? He tried to recover his spirit, but then Higashi approached. The sword penetrated Jeremy's stomach.

“.....!”

He fell to his knees. Blood gushed out from the wound in his abdomen. Jeremy's head hit the ground. He could see Higashi's legs slowly moving away in the corner of his vision.

“I have no more time to play today.”

“...Cough, puhuhu.”

Jeremy couldn't help laughing.

Death, he had never thought about it. Was death coming this way? Death was now passing close to life. It wasn't strange that he died from a sword. His sword was covered with the blood of many, and not all of them died so easily.

Anyway, life and death were both fleeting. Now it was his turn.

Jeremy closed his eyes.

He wouldn't be subservient. There was no need to regret it. Life was rough, so he should calmly accept his death. Embrace it.

.....

His vision became dark. In the darkness, something fluttered.

...Dead.

Someone spoke. It was an eerie voice.

...Do you know death?

...I have never witnessed an irreversible one.

Jeremy wanted to open his eyes, but there was no sensation at all, like his body had disappeared. Only his consciousness floated in this deep darkness. At that moment, a terrible scream coming from the Abyss shook him.

It was terrible. It was a vicious cry that seemed to scrap against his soul. His heart seemed to stop. The voice continued to whisper.

...It isn't your time yet.

...Then I will be waiting.

The horrible scream constantly echoed around him as he rose in the darkness.

Terrible fear. He had to escape. He wanted to get away. Every part of his body was twisting from fear.

He opened his eyes.

“...Cough!”

Then he coughed up blood. Black blood was scattered on the floor.

He wasn't dead yet. He moved his gaze.

“.....!”

Oh my god. He couldn't believe his eyes. It was impossible.

One, two, they were standing up. The dead residents were rising again. Even Higashi didn't understand this situation as he fell back. Countless bodies were revived again as an unknown black energy covered their bodies.

The astonished clan members swung their weapons at the

corpses, but their attacks couldn't pierce the black energy.

Jeremy turned his head. From far away, someone was slowly walking towards them. On the man's back, there was a gigantic darkness that resembled the wings of a demon with the tongue of a snake.

Jeremy had heard about this.

The worst beings. The demons' spokesmen who brought hell to life.

"Necromancer..."

The middle-aged man carrying the hellish darkness stood in front of them. His ominous eyes scanned the area. And he declared.

"I am the wine man, Kim Chul...no, Iron."

He raised his hand. The corpses started to surround the enemies like beings from hell.

"I came here to punish the people who are like rice wine."

Chapter 47 – A FIRE IN THE SKY (2)

The dead rose and struck the users. Higashi cut at the people coming towards him, but they just rose up again and stretched out bloody hands to him. Higashi freaked out and sliced apart their bodies.

He looked around. The clan members were also lost due to this bizarre sight. They slaughtered the dead for a second time. Cutting them in the abdomen didn't kill them. Instead, they kept staring with resentful eyes as they used their broken bones as their weapons.

It was a hell-like pandemonium.

Higashi looked at the man who was the source of all this. The middle-aged man, the necromancer named Iron. A black haze extended from his body to dominate the battlefield. Higashi felt an instinctive fear towards him. Necromancy was a strength that could be called the antithesis of life.

But as the Yamato Clan's vice-leader and ranker, he couldn't back off. As the screams of his clan members were heard behind him, Higashi rushed to Iron. It was the typical attack using the sword and the shield!

But he overlooked that his opponent wasn't a warrior.

The darkness slithered around his neck, as a cold chill went down his spine, surrounding him. Something was wrong.

Jjejeok.

He was thrown back as he heard a sound. The sky and ground turned upside down. Higashi couldn't think. He tried to get up, but his eyes were ringing and he couldn't find his center. He relied on his sword as his body staggered.

Iron stretched out hands towards him.

“Don't resist. You will regret it.”

It was a solemn declaration. And it was serious. If Higashi resisted any longer, then he would see terrible things.

Iron was the worst type of necromancer, the one with the presence of a demon. He contracted with an entity that should not be called unto the lands. This was why he hadn't connected to Elder Lord for a while. He was different from the other necromancers, who only raised the dead.

He wasn't a ranker, but he contracted with a powerful demon who could make even rankers kneel. There was a price for that great power, which was to pay compensation to the demon.

Demogorgon!

“Life to death, laughter to screaming.”

Iron's body soon escaped from his control. The lion of hell who borrowed his body opened his mouth, "There are so many of them. Those cursed by the stars, what a funny joke."

The demon occupying Iron's body giggled. Iron's body no longer followed his control. His mind was locked in his body and he felt all sensations without any filters. Even pain.

"It feels good to meet you again after a long wait, Contractor."

He scratched at Iron's chest with his fingertips. The demon's punishment. Iron swallowed down the pain. He had signed with a being that shouldn't have existed in the game. People protested several times to Elder Lord Corporation, but they ignored it, saying it was an element of the game.

An evil demon that took away control from the user! Demogorgon told Iron, "You must've been doing well."

Iron inwardly cursed before replying, "Yes yes! That's correct. Demogorgon! I wanted you to have peace! Hahat."

"Well, I guess you have been doing fine."

"It is all thanks to Demogorgon. I've been so busy, but I always thought about Demogorgon. Hahat! Now I feel like a fish in the water."

“As expected from my trusty contractor. Kukahahaha!”

“Were you expecting anything else? Kukaka!”

That’s right. It was one reason why Iron was able to deal with a high ranking demon. The worldly wisdom of a sales department manager!

He had the skill ‘Sales Force (Essence)!’ Thanks to this skill, Iron was able to deal with the demon. Even though there was a big side effect of losing control, the demon helped Iron out with great power.

“Yes, it has been a while, so I will listen to what my contractor wants. What is your reason for calling me? Do you want the advent of hell? Do you want to recreate souls by mixing together life and death?”

“Hah... Is such a thing possible? As always, Demogorgon’s strength and talent is something I can only admire. Hahahahat! But these people deserve more than that. I want them to never come to this place again.”

“Kukakakaka! I see. Is that enough?”

“There is no need to use a knife to catch a mouse. Furthermore, Demogorgon isn’t a knife, but a dragon. No, they don’t deserve the final weapon that will destroy this world! They are unworthy of it. Please~ give this present to me! Yes!”

“Kukakakakaka!”

Demogorgon burst out laughing. How long had it been since he had a contractor who was such a good fit? Demogorgon smirked and looked at all the enemies in front of him.

On the other hand, horror gripped Higashi. The necromancer was mumbling to himself like he was crazy. Iron looked at Higashi. “You.”

“.....!”

“Do you know?”

Higashi raised his sword and shield as he asked, “What do you mean?”

“What comes without sound, tears apart your life, and isn’t reversible?”

A voice spoke in Higashi’s ears.

‘...Death.’

Higashi freaked out and turned his body, but there was nothing there. He flinched back. The voice whispered in his ear again.

‘...The eternal sinking.’

Higashi blocked his ears. He looked around. Iron couldn't be seen. There was nobody. There were only the dead bodies and the corpses of the clan members on the floor.

‘...Do you want to know it?’

Something touched his spine. It was under his skin. The demon's hand touched his skin, muscles, and nervous system. Higashi flopped down. He couldn't breathe. The sky was in front of him. A dark curtain started to descend from the sky.

‘...I'm going to show you.’

His vision became dark.

Raizen, master of the Napoleon Clan and ranker, couldn't believe it.

Obviously, it was very easy. The four clans allied in order to decimate an unknown village. Once they trampled on the village and raised the level of their new clan members, they would create a base here to gain more wealth and power.

An easy and efficient operation. Everything had gone as planned. However, the existence of these guys wasn't drawn in the nice blueprint.

“Warriors! Too cool! The best!” The elf female trembled and made a fuss.

“Hahaha. As expected of the warrior chosen by the great sage.” A magician with a long beard nodded.

“I'm the only one without a great role.” A man holding a sword shrugged at his colleagues' remarks.

Then warrior Bob, the man who was being praised by everyone, lifted his shining sword. “My sword, X-Geiger is howling! For justice!”

Raizen now realized it.

These crazy guys. They were crazy roleplaying lovers. He didn't want to get involved with crazy people like this. But the problem was that the crazy people weren't just joking around when it came to strength.

“That guy's eyes! They are eyes steeped in evil!”

“We'll must discipline them.”

“The wise sage can see everything.”

No, don't come over you crazy people.

Raizen ran around. After the fight began, the front line started to be pushed back. The middle-aged man who seemed to be the leader worked hard to encourage the residents, but the clan gradually drove them back. The moment the clan was about to purge the villagers with powerful ranged magic...

All of a sudden, these people appeared and attacked. The warrior's sword moved through all air, and all of the gathered magic power was scattered. A vacuum that drew in all the magic power in the area! They exhibited huge strength and instantly stopped the Napoleon Clan's march.

An unexpected variable. However, it wasn't impossible.

“Everybody gather here! Catch these guys!”

Raizen screamed and stepped back. The clan members recognized the instructions and flocked to his side. No matter how strong the opponents were, they were outnumbered.

The men and woman in the group of four were nervous. Raizen laughed. The group couldn't deal with so many clan members.

It was at that moment. The villagers who didn't know English soon realized that the group were allies and moved forward.

Numerous residents stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the group.

Raizen's face distorted again.

“We will fight together!” The villagers held farm equipment and rusty weapons. However, determination shone in their eyes. This was their village. They would protect it themselves.

The Napoleon Clan was stunned.

“How about it, didn't we do well coming here?”

“Yes.”

“The best stage.”

The four roleplayers, F4, exchanged glances as they stood with the residents. It felt good. No, it was a good thing. The best.

It had been a long time. The four of them had created and destroyed worlds. They rolled the dice for a long time, but had felt empty.

They came here to the world of Elder Lord because they knew the reason why. Those who stood with them. Having companions stand next to them was required on adventures. It wasn't a fiction that the master of the dice created, but a reality where their allies breathed, thought, cried, laughed, and felt anger. A party always

needed some allies, and today, they were standing as heroes to the people who needed them.

Bob raised his sword.

“Now! My sword X-Geiger! My sword doesn’t drink water, nor alcohol, nor the blood of the enemy!”

“...Is this necessary?”

Elia whispered as Bob started talking nonsense. But Bob’s mood was the best. Thus, Bob couldn’t stop anymore.

“What does my sword need?”

Elia, Joseph and Gary laughed. It was obvious what Bob was going to shout next. The line that they always told him not to say. The very thing that caused them to cringe in embarrassment. But they would accept it today.

“Justice!”

“Justice!”

“Justiceeee!”

“Justice!”

The roleplayers shouted at the same time. Raizen saw the funny scene, but he couldn't laugh. It was because they unleashed a wild assault.

Crockta gasped for breath, wielding his greatsword like crazy.

But the enemies didn't give up. He trampled the enemies, but more enemies appeared.

Moreover, several influential figures were acting to keep Crockta in check. Crockta tried to help the inhabitants, but the enemies kept Crockta away from them. He could only watch as the residents were slaughtered.

Crockta thought despairingly. Insufficient. His power was lacking. More power was needed.

Crockta rushed again, but was blocked by several people. He wielded his greatsword at their defense. He was able to slash at one user; but at the same time, he received multiple wounds on his body. Blood and flesh were scattered onto the floor.

Crockta fell to his knees.

"Don't be upset, Orc." They said with a laugh.

Crockta closed his eyes. He still had power left. He grabbed his greatsword. It was only up to here, but it was still good. He had done his best. It couldn't be helped.

However, he would stamp it clearly. What an orc was.

Crockta opened his eyes. He prepared for his last hurrah.

It was at that moment.

Dudududududu.

The earth shook.

“.....?”

Everyone on the battlefield gazed at a distant place. Dust had risen up.

“...W-What?”

Crockta also lifted his head. The earth was ringing.

Dudududududu.

A crowd of people were rushing from the horizon towards this place.

Dududududu.

Everyone looked at them. The distance narrowed. The earth shook like there was an earthquake.

Dududududu!

Chapter 48 – A FIRE IN THE SKY (3)

Dudududududu!

“T-This is...!”

By the time the crowd became close enough to see, it was already too late. The orc squads destroyed the formation with a tank-like assault. A user’s head flew through the air. The orc’s huge weapons took the enemy’s heads off. Terrible weapons such as halberds, double-edged axes, twin axes, and hammers tore all over the place.

“W-What?”

Orc troops suddenly appeared! They started to devastate the front lines. Crockta could see shining white stars on their foreheads.

He could guess the situation. Laughter emerged.

The video shot by Laney in Dandelion Village seemed to have called them. He had stimulated the fighting spirits of the enthusiasts who played as orcs. The fires of hope rose again at the unexpected appearance.

The orc’s battle cry rang out loudly.

“Brothers! Don’t show any mercy!”

An orc shaman caught a user's neck with his bare hands, lightning emerging from his hands. The tremendous lightning storm! The enemy became a charred body. He threw it towards the enemies and roared.

“Bul'tarrrr!”

How long had it been since Crockta heard that battle cry? Something boiled up in Crockta's chest. Crockta responded.

“Bul'tarrrr—————!”

He met the gaze of the other orc.

Ssik. They exchanged glances. Then the other orcs started yelling. Their battle cries dominated the battlefield like those of wild beasts.

The villagers could only watch with stunned expressions. The exciting orcs suddenly appeared! Every time they wielded a weapon, enemies fell. The residents also raised their weapons. They didn't know what was going on, but orcs were here. They could win.

They didn't know what it meant, but they also participated by shouting the orc's battle cry.

“Bul’tar!”

Now the battlefield was a swirl of chaos. Humans vs humans, orcs vs humans, they all mixed together and aimed weapons at each other. People became dead bodies or turned into white particles. It wouldn’t stop until one of the two sides died!

There was also considerable resistance from the clan. The high levels and rankers confronted the surprise attack.

“Dirty orc scum...!”

“I wash more often than you!”

The second lord of the Orc Users Brotherhood founded by Maguchwi, the No.2 orc user Kuwakta, focused his spirit.

He was originally a natural landscape photographer who loved beautiful nature, flora, and fauna. After accidentally starting the game, he became immersed in the magnificent scenery of Elder Lord that couldn’t be seen anywhere else. Therefore, he didn’t become an orc warrior or shaman.

Nature’s friend! Orc Druid!

“Phoenix’s Possession!”

He used a skill. While exploring the world of Elder Lord, he had

met a powerful and mysterious being.

Blazing wings stretched out behind his back, his hands becoming flaming phoenix claws. Every time he waved his limbs, flames moved around him and ate at the bodies of the enemies, effectively killing them.

“This is crazy!”

A mystic summoned a water spirit, but the phoenix around Kuwakta bit at it. The mystic that summoned it suffered at the same time. The water spirit turned into vapor and disappeared into the air.

“Water is burning...?”

The mystic flopped down. Kuwakta asked with the phoenix’s claws at their neck, “What do you call that spirit?”

“What...?”

“Do you know the name of that spirit?”

“.....!”

“You just call it a spirit. You don’t even know their names.” Kuwakta’s claws bit into the mystic’s neck. The body of the mystic started to burn. “Spirits aren’t tools, but friends. Your lack of

knowledge is the cause of your defeat.”

“That, friends...” The mystic nodded within the fire. He lost, but somehow he felt refreshed.

The druid removed his hand as the body of the mystic became distorted by the flames. The mystic stared at the orc druid until his eyeballs burned. It was great. He would remember this the next time he met the druid.

The mystic smiled. His vision was cut off and his consciousness faded away. Immediately before his connection was cut off, the orc druid’s faint cry was heard.

“Let’s fight! Phoenix! Phoenix, what are you doing? Phoenix ohh!”

“.....?”

Meanwhile, Crockta was confronting a ranker. He joined forces with other orcs to knock down the ranker. The ranker looked at his missing lower body and muttered like he couldn’t believe his defeat.

“Shit... Losing to orcs...”

“What else do you expect when you pick weak NPCs to level up?”

The moment that the orc who allied with Crockta was about to hit the ranker's neck...

“Weak NPCs? Didn't we kill your favourite Lenox? Kuku...”

“.....!”

Warrior Instructor Lenox was a famous NPC among the orc users as well. Those who killed him felt pride. They were the Thawing Balhae Clan.

Crockta realized that the users in this area were from the Thawing Balhae Clan. His eyes changed. The orc user who fought with him steadily kicked the face of the ranker. The body without a lower half rolled across the ground and started to slowly fade into white particles.

After the ranker's death, Crockta scanned in front of him.

The traitor Grom, who was called Hyunchul, would surely be here. He heard the clan member saying that they would raise him up. The reason for this massacre was that they were trying to nurture the low-level clan members.

Crockta plunged back into the front lines. He approached a place that was filled with Thawing Balhae members and shouted, “Hyunchul!”

No one answered. Crockta stabbed a user in the abdomen with

his greatsword and continued searching. Then he shouted again, “Hyunchul! What are you doing?”

A user suddenly looked around. Crockta laughed. Fortunately, he hadn’t died yet. Crockta approached him while pretending to know nothing. It was a human male character, the preferred warrior character holding a sword and shield. The face was handsome, due to the customization feature of Elder Lord.

This was the current appearance of Hyunchul, he who sold out Lenox and the orc warriors to the humans. Crockta made note of his appearance. Then he ran around. He found something that was like a rope. Even though the battle in Chesswood was urgent, he would make it so that Hyunchul couldn’t play the game anymore.

But at that moment, the double-edged blade of an axe appeared behind Hyunchul’s back. Hyunchul was defenseless.

Crockta sighed.

Hyunchul was weak after becoming a human. As he watched Hyunchul’s head being split apart by the axe, Crockta pledged the following. Rather, this was better. It would be better to do it after Hyunchul grew some more. That way, his despair would be greater if the character that he raised to a high level was trampled on.

Hyunchul’s body was vertically split in half. Crockta approached. Hyunchul’s body turned white. Crockta spat on the white particles.

A user's blade cut Blackmore. Blood poured out.

“.....”

Blackmore pierced the opponent's neck with his spear, who collapsed with blood bubbling in his mouth. Blackmore pulled out the spear and stepped back.

He scanned the situation. The opponents were advancing systematically in a maintained formation. Magical flames fell from the sky. The residents screamed for help as they were engulfed in flames. Regardless of the confusion on the battlefield, the enemies were steadfastly moving.

It was disadvantageous. These guys weren't comparable to those who had been in Dandelion Village. They made the right decisions. It was doubtful that an individual could change the situation.

Since the start of the fight, Blackmore had felt that it was difficult. He foresaw a defeat in this battle. The power gap was severe. Was there any other place to deal with it? Blackmore shook his head. Unless there was a god's help, it would be the same as here.

Blackmore thought about fleeing. But his legs kept heading towards the front.

He laughed. Why was his body heading forward? The battle of Dandelion Village entered his mind. He had run away, but the orc Crockta had risked his life for the villages, despite it not being his hometown. Blackmore felt ashamed as he saw it.

Chesswood, a collection of beautiful and simple villages. He had been a cancer that harmed the atmosphere of this place. There was a woman who he tried to pretend with, but even she became hurt and left him. After that, he became blinded and attacked indiscriminately. When he recovered and looked around, all he could see was hurt and devastation.

Now it was time to pay that back. Poison must be burned with poison.

The residents were fleeing. Blackmore nodded. There should be some who survived. There was no need for everyone to die. Blackmore blocked the enemies that were pursuing them.

Blackmore hummed, "I have travelled to many places in the world. Always looking for new things..."

He brandished his spear. Blood splattered. There was a bad taste in his mouth. Blackmore giggled and continued the melody again. "But I've realized. I had already found the things I was looking for..."

The enemies chased after the fleeing villagers. Blackmore rushed between them. The attacks of the invaders poured towards Blackmore's body. Some were blocked, while others hit. He spat

out the blood in his mouth as the eyes of the enemies shook. Blackmore laughed and pointed his spear at them.

More were blocked and hit.

“Cough!”

The attacks of the enemies aimed at Blackmore again. This time he couldn't stop them. Blackmore stepped back, his knees folding. His blood soaked into the ground.

He raised his head. Those guys were approaching. He couldn't help laughing.

Ah, the buzzing in his head. ‘Dancing under the moonlight, singing in the rain.’

“Oh, I'm happy to be back home...”

For a moment, Blackmore's spear moved explosively. The enemy was unable to cope with the sudden onslaught and was pierced in the stomach. He turned into white particles.

The cursed people. Why did they come here?

Blackmore found the next enemy with his spear.

“Laughing under the sun and running along the road...”

Puok.

Blackmore looked down at his chest. The end of a sword had pierced through the flesh. Sharp. It was no wonder that it penetrated his body. Blackmore laughed. Blood flowed down from his mouth.

‘Bitch, you stabbed a little too late.’

He still had a few words left. His vision blurred. The ground was up and the sky was down. He closed his eyes as the world shook. What were the last lyrics? His consciousness gradually faded away.

The world was dark.

‘Ah! I’m happy to be back home!’

Chapter 49 – Fallen God

Gordon got off his wagon.

It was incomprehensible. He knew that Chesswood was a beautiful village.

“What is all this...?”

The settlers he picked up also looked around in bewilderment. This wasn't the Chesswood that they had decided to move to. The area was burned to the ground and in ruins. There were bodies all over the place. The father covered his children's eyes and sent them back to the luggage compartment with his wife.

“Oh my god. What is going on...?”

“It is like it seems.”

The father's attitude had become cautious ever since he witnessed Gordon killing the attackers. He asked, “I'm sorry but... Can you take us a little further?”

They had decided to settle on Dandelion Village, but they had relatives living in the other villages of Chesswood. However, there were ruins everywhere. It was so confusing that they didn't even know how to respond. First, they had to go to the other villages in Chesswood to figure out what was going on.

“What the hell is going on...?”

“Wait a bit.”

Gordon's ears heard something, his keen senses picking up the noise of a battlefield in the distance. His eyes were cold. It was in the direction of Edelweiss Village in the center of Chesswood. Gordon placed a hand on the hilt of his sword.

“.....?”

The father became nervous about Gordon's sword. Gordon raised both hands and laughed.

“Haha. Please wait here. I will go ahead and see what is going on. If there is an incident...”

“Yes...”

“Don't worry. I will just go and see the situation.” Gordon untied one of the four horses pulling the wagon. After putting on a saddle, he got on the horse. “Rest in the wagon. I'll be back quickly.”

“Yes. Thank you.”

Gordon moved. First of all, he headed to an inn located on the outskirts of Azalea Village. It was where Rachel was, but her inn had already been razed into the ground. Among the broken

buildings, unidentified bodies were scattered.

“.....”

She wasn't his lover. They were closer than friends, but it wasn't an intimate relationship. However, he couldn't see that bright smile anymore.

Gordon continued onwards. His keen hearing continued to grasp the noise of the distant battlefield. He kicked the horse and started running again. He passed Chrysanthemum Village beyond Dandelion Village. It was also in ruins.

Beyond Chrysanthemum Village was Myrtle Village. All ruins.

Then he witnessed the fighting of the army that was trying to penetrate Edelweiss. War. It was a mess of death and killing. Gordon saw the white stars on the foreheads of the invaders and was able to understand everything.

Gordon's finger stroked the handle of his sword. They didn't know anything. He got off his horse and tied it up in a safe place. The horse was scared by the noise from the battlefield. He swept the horse's man away and placed his forehead against its brow.

“Wait here quietly. I'll be back.”

The horse looked at Gordon, who in turn tapped its cheek.

“Don’t worry.”

Then he headed to the front lines. The residents of Elder Lord were fleeing from the users. Gordon approached a user and stabbed him in the neck. No one noticed Gordon’s presence. The user gradually changed into white particles.

“But I’ve realized. I had already found the things I was looking for...”

He suddenly heard a song. Gordon raised his head. He discovered a man holding a spear. The man was bloody all over as he blocked the users. He smiled when he saw the residents running away. As if he was the patron saint of this place, he stopped the enemies.

The man continued singing. Gordon realized that the man was determined to die. He had the eyes of a person who had abandoned life. A lot of things must’ve happened in order for a human to neglect living. Nobody could judge the stories that must be woven around that man.

The invaders here wouldn’t have consideration for such things. Gordon cut down users as he walked over to the man. He noticed the enemy behind him. Gordon’s blade pierced the user’s neck.

“Keooo...”

“You can’t see it...”

Gordon's blade was like light itself. However, there was still a thick line between him and the man with the spear. Despite Gordon's efforts, the man was stabbed in the abdomen.

The song that he was singing stopped. What were the lyrics was he trying to sing?

Another life experienced an irreversible death. It was a sad day. Gordon looked up at the sky.

If a child pulled the trigger, it wasn't the fault of the child, but the fault of the adult. The adult who placed the gun in the child's hand, without explaining anything. He could understand it in his head.

But what about the child's punishment? The bullet fired from the gun had taken someone's life.

[Your assimilation rate has risen.]

[Assimilation rate has reached the limit set.]

[Current assimilation rate: 89%]

Gordon wielded his sword. A dazzling darkness covered the

battlefield.

“.....!”

The front line was broken. The surrounding area had been cut in the shape of a fan.

A massacre committed by a cold soldier. The battlefield became quiet. Gordon walked steadily. Now all eyes on the battlefield were looking at Gordon. Their faces were shocked, like they didn't understand what had happened.

Some strong players blocked Gordon. They were breathing nervously and seemed tense as they spoke to each other.

“Appearing suddenly like this. What is your name and class?”

“Where did this guy...”

The strongest person among them spoke, “Pincer attack. Do it slowly.”

“Yes Brother.”

“Brother is a ranker as well. We can win.”

The five users, including the ranker, surrounded Gordon. Every

one of them seemed to have a high level. Gordon laughed. Then he wielded his sword again.

The world stopped. His blade moved slowly, but the opponents failed to avoid it. This moment seemed to last forever to the enemy. Gordon's sword broke the laws of the world and swept over the enemies. It was a sword that cut the space and converged on the enemy.

Slowly. Carefully. The blade met skin. Five heads simultaneously flew through the air.

“.....!”

The moment the fifth head was completely separated from the body, the world returned to its original state. Fountains of blood rose from five necks at the same time.

Everyone was shocked. The ranker and powerhouses that they were so proud of had fallen at the same time. They couldn't even see what had happened. The bodies turned into white particles. Gordon went forward. The enemies retreated.

The brand on their forehead was stinging. The brand whispered to him.

.....

.....

That desolate voice. Gordon smiled as he killed another person.

It was unfair. They didn't know anything about the curse of the stars as they casually went around committing terrible sins. He would stab their ignorant selves with this sword.

Crockta ran towards the northeast front. It was Blackmore's battlefield.

In the other battlefields, armed forces had appeared like a miracle and created victory. However, Blackmore's battlefield was the only one where they received news that the residents were retreating. Crockta achieved the first victory and headed to the northeast front.

“.....!”

But the only thing visible was bodies. Both allies and enemies were dead. There was only one person standing.

“...You?”

Crockta approached him. The man had his head bowed while covered in blood and flesh. Crockta's heart pounded. He felt an unknown feeling without knowing why. It felt like he was familiar

with this person.

The man raised his head.

“.....”

The man met Crockta’s gaze.

“You?” Crockta asked. The man’s eyes widened slightly and he scrutinized Crockta. He stopped at the bandana covering Crockta’s forehead.

The man asked a question instead of answering, “What is your name?”

Crockta realized that this man was the one who killed all the enemies here. He was able to tell just by meeting the man’s eyes.

“Crockta.”

“Crockta...”

The man looked at the sky again. He seemed to be thinking about something. Then he laughed. “I can never know this world.”

“What?”

“How long has it been since you started Elder Lord?”

“.....”

This was the first time that Crockta realized that the man was a user. Crockta watched him with wide eyes. The man was still smiling. “Around three months...”

“What about this place?”

“Not even five days.”

“Did you...”

Suddenly, Crockta saw a familiar face behind the man. Blackmore, now a cold body lying in the middle of the battlefield. Crockta rushed over.

“Blackmore...!”

His abdomen was pierced, but his face looked serene. There was an unknown smile on his face.

“Blackmore...”

His heart was pained. No matter what he used to be, Crockta thought of him as a man who loved both his songs and his

hometown. He was a minstrel who admired Crockta's song and recorded his inspiration.

“You are sad because he is dead,” the man said from behind. “Even though he is a NPC?”

Crockta turned to him. The man wasn't laughing or ridiculing him. He had a lonely smile on his face. Crockta replied, “Any death on the battlefield is sad.”

“.....”

Crockta was well aware of this. Whether they were an enemy or ally, all deaths caused sadness in someone.

He saw the residents and orcs running over in the distance. The battle seemed to be completely finished. Ingram and Jeremy's face also appeared. All of them had won. Only Blackmore remained here as a cold body.

It would have been nice if he had lived to the end. Together, they could sing and celebrate the victory. It was also possible to create new songs together. Crockta suppressed his sorrow and got up.

The man said, “Crockta, listen.”

“.....?”

“There is the Temple of the Fallen God in the north.”

What was he saying? Crockta looked at the man. The man still had an unknown smile on his face.

“If all these deaths are truly sad...” He turned around. “Go to the Temple of the Fallen God.”

“What...”

Crockta tried to grab him but he was already walking away.

“.....!”

The space seemed to fold and he suddenly appeared in a distant place. Crockta gazed grimly after him. He didn't even know the man's name.

“Temple of the Fallen God...?” Crockta muttered. But there was no time to think about it any further. Jeremy and Ingram were running towards Crockta.

“Brother! You're safe!” Jeremy stood beside Crockta and fell silent as he discovered Blackmore's body.

“.....”

Ingram walked up to Blackmore. He kneeled down and stroked Blackmore's cheeks with wet eyes. His hands rose to cover his eyes. Blackmore and countless other residents had died. Everybody grabbed the body of someone they knew and sobbed uncontrollably. The battlefield, Chesswood was filled with grief.

It was a sad war. They had won the war, but the sorrow was all theirs.

Chapter 50 – And Then...

The war ended. Chesswood had won, after their many great sacrifices.

The funerals for the dead didn't last long because of the hunger of the living.

“It is a big deal.”

The residents rushed over to the ruined villages. Everything they built had turned into ash. Edelweiss supported the other villages, but there was a limit to the amount of food and supplies that could be shared.

Then a merchant company appeared, as if they had been waiting for the war to finish. They entered the ruined Chesswood with daily necessities, food, and building supplies. A memorandum was given to those who couldn't pay the price.

All of them signed it. The residents who almost lost their lives had no qualms about risking their lives for their future.

Crockta frowned as he asked, “Derek?”

“Well, yes.”

Jeremy replied.

Derek was involved in the rebuilding process of the collapsed Chesswood and spread out his influence as a result. Now most of the residents of Chesswood were debtors who owed him.

Crockta didn't ask anything more. He didn't like Derek's behavior, but there was nothing he could do. Beyond the good in the world, there was also selfishness and malice. If he had to choose, then he would prefer the former over the latter.

Derek bought the equipment from the dead users for more than their value.

"I see, this is how Derek works."

"Yes. He does whatever he wants."

After the situation was settled, Crockta looked for the users who helped Chesswood. They didn't explain about the video because they thought Crockta was a NPC. They just said that they heard rumors of an honorable orc and came to help. Crockta inwardly laughed.

"Thank you for the help Iron."

"No. I just did what I had to do."

Iron and Crockta shook hands. Iron was very gentle when he

wasn't acting like a crazy necromancer. His attitude as he shook hands had no error, and even the angle of his line of sight was perfect.

This was the person who decimated a clan alone? Crockta felt admiration towards him. Iron sent him a mysterious smile and said, "This is my business card..."

"Yes...?"

"Ah, I made a mistake." He flinched due to his habit of automatically stretched out his hand. "Please don't pay attention to it. Huhuhuhu."

"Ah, yes..."

"Crockta, people like us will develop a deeper flavor as time passes, just like wine ripens."

"Yes...?"

"It was great to meet you. You are a man that is like a bunch of burgundy grapes shining under the sun. I want to meet you again, just like opening the bottle of wine that I saved for the moment when it has the best flavor."

"...T-Thank you."

Iron ran his finger over his eyebrows and then pointed it at the sky.

“Adios Amigo!”

“Ah, yes... Take care of yourself.”

Iron laughed and turned away. He never looked back, just waving his hand high in the sky as he left. It seemed like this situation had inspired something. Crockta wanted to see him off, but then he felt a gaze on his from behind.

“That mister...?”

“That necromancer would have no problem joining our team if he has such a concept.”

“A nice guy.”

Another group that helped Chesswood, F4, admired Iron.

Crockta greeted them, “Thanks to you, I was able to defend the village.” At Crockta’s words, the warrior Bob emerged to represent the group.

“Honorable orc Crockta, do you see this?”

“Huh?”

Bob held out his sword, the so-called X-Geiger. The sword was vibrating. As Crockta looked closer, Bob was lightly shaking the sword with fine wrist snaps.

“X-Geiger is crying out in response to your hot soul.”

“.....?”

What was this?

“Your hot heart has protected this peaceful village from the invaders! It allowed X-Geiger to lead us here!”

“.....!”

“Crockta, my X-Geiger is always thirsty. X-Geiger isn’t thirsty for water, alcohol, nor the enemy’s blood. My X-Geiger drinks...! Hup...!”

The elf Elia covered Bob’s mouth. Bob and Elia struggled for a while. Instead of them, the bearded magician Joseph stepped forward.

“I am the great sage. Honorable orc Crockta, this great sage has something to say to you.”

“Yes, Great Sage.”

“Keep the peace of Middle Earth.”

“Middle Ea...rth?”

“You have to destroy the ring...!”

Crockta gave up thinking. Then it was Gary’s turn. The man with dark eyebrows hit Crockta’s shoulder. It was an intense gaze.

“Crockta.”

“Yes.”

“Be well. We will be enemies when we meet again next time.”

Then he dramatically turned around.

“.....”

Why would they be enemies, what...? Crockta couldn’t understand, but they seemed like people who really enjoyed Elder Lord. He bowed to express his appreciation.

“Aren’t they crazy over there...?”

“Yes...”

The Orc Users Brotherhood shook their heads as they watched the scene. No matter how realistic the game was, there were some people who got too caught up in the concept. After speaking to F4, Crockta stood in front of the orcs.

“.....”

“.....”

Their eyes met. It was enough. The passionate eye contact between orcs!

Someone hit their thick chest and yelled, “Bul’tar————! I’m alive! Brother!”

“Bul’tar————! Stay alive, Brothers!”

They grabbed each other’s hands and slammed their shoulders against each other. Crockta also grabbed the hand of one of the orc brothers. It was close to a battle of strength.

“It was an honorable fight————!”

“No one can stop the way of the orcs!”

“Victory and glory! If I can’t live then I would rather die————!”

“Bul’tar! An honorable death rather than a subservient life!”

The orcs shouted together.

“Waaahhhhhhhh!”

“Bul’tarrrr!”

“Kuaaaah!”

Soon everyone was standing shoulder to shoulder. Crockta started to sing, “We are orcs! The mighty orcs!”

All the orcs sang along.

“You’ll be in trouble if you mess with us! The great warriors have appeared!”

“Humans, get lost! Elves, get lost! Dwarves, get lost! You guys too!”

“Pretty women? Warriors have no need for a woman! We are great orcs, great warriors!”

“We are orcs! The mighty orcs!”

“You’ll be in trouble if you mess with us!”

The harsh harmonies shook the earth! The F4 group shook their heads as they watched the exciting festival of the orc users.

“We still have manners.”

“They sold their soul to the concept.”

“That is ‘real’...”

Crockta said farewell to the users and climbed Edelweiss’ hill with Jeremy. The tall hill looked over the villages of Chesswood spread out in a checkered pattern.

Blackmore was buried here. It was a short relationship. They had only walked together for a while, but it was enough time to feel his inner nature. He was a good man. On his grave, Crockta set down the musical instrument that Blackmore always carried around with him.

Crockta declared, “Jeremy.”

“Huh?”

“Where do people go if they die?”

Jeremy shrugged. “Well, I don’t know. Won’t he go to Heaven because he died for others?”

“Heaven...”

Yes.

Blackmore had gone to Heaven. Would it be Heaven if he was scattered around Elder Lord’s servers as packets of data?

Crockta looked at Jeremy. His face was tinged with the glow of the sun. Jeremy was a man who always grunted and spoke a lot. However, his eyes were currently red. Was it because of the glow or not?

Jeremy started to whistle. It was Blackmore’s song. The melody of the minstrel who longed for his hometown covered the hill as Jeremy whistled. Was someone whispering the words along with the whistle? Was Jeremy, hiding his wet eyes, just an electronic signal calculated by a computer? Was his grief just converted game data?

‘If all these deaths are truly sad, go to the Temple of the Fallen

God.'

The man's voice popped into his head.

Crockta walked towards a large rock on a corner of the hill. He used Ogre Slayer on it, slicing the enormous rock into the shape of a cross. He moved it and set it down on Blackmore's grave.

Crockta carved an epitaph for Blackmore using the tip of the sword. He was dead, so this was the only thing Crockta could do.

Jeremy spoke from behind Crockta, "Crockta."

He had always called Crockta 'Orc brother'. It was strange hearing Jeremy's voice call his name. Crockta looked at Jeremy. "Boss sent me some information about those bastards."

"I see."

"Brother, whatever you do, I would like to go with you."

Jeremy's eyes were serious. Crockta laughed.

"What, why are you laughing? Don't get me wrong, I just don't like those guys."

"I didn't say anything."

“Your eyes look awful,” Jeremy grumbled.

Crockta completed the gravestone. Jeremy approached and touched the words. “I’ll go to hell anyway, so I will never meet you again.”

A minstrel who matched Heaven, Blackmore.

“Goodbye, Minstrel Brother.”

Crockta and Jeremy left Blackmore’s grave. It was another farewell. As the wind blew, the sound of Blackmore’s instrument rang through the hills. The clear sound was heard.

Crockta and Jeremy waved their hands in response.

Derek signed the paper.

“Good work.”

“It is nothing.”

Ever since Jeremy left, Derek had another subordinate doing his role. Derek leaned his elbow on the office table and touched his

chin.

“What did Jeremy reply?”

“He will watch the orc a little more.”

“Huhu.”

Derek laughed.

He didn't believe it. Jeremy was probably excited by Crockta, and wanted to go together with him more. Jeremy was such a person. He pretended to be cold-blooded and rough, but he couldn't easily shake it off once he felt affection for someone.

“...Boss, will this really result in some money?”

“If you open up your mind, then you will see the path.”

“How do you know to invest in this?”

“If you are talking about the reconstruction project, of course I don't know. That's why I will recollect it later.”

Derek grabbed a piece of paper and started writing a letter. The recipient was Jeremy.

“Investment doesn’t necessarily mean monetary gain.”

“.....?”

“Keep this in mind. Preparing for future risks can also be called an investment from a broad perspective.” Derek continued to move his pen. The length of the letter got longer. “In order to figure out the profits, I need to know the anxiety factors.”

“Anxiety factors...?”

Derek raised the letter instead of answering. He placed it in an envelope and sealed it with candle wax. He extended it to the man.

“Do you understand that I know who will betray me later?”

“.....”

“Take care of it.”

“I understand.”

The man nodded. Derek’s expression indicated that there should be no more questions asked. The subordinate immediately retreated and left Derek’s office. The door closed and Derek buried himself in his chair.

He recalled Jeremy's face. He had been a boy living in the rough back alleys that grew up into a fine, young man. Jeremy grew so well that he was about to break the line that Derek had hung around his neck.

“One day it would come.”

Derek smiled. The feast had to end one day. Once the feast was over, the table would be cleaned up.

Chapter 51 – Freedom

The Thawing Balhae Clan's members decreased. Both the incident in Arnin and the unveiling of their plot in Chesswood had severely hurt them. Even the public opinion on the Internet was against them. The name of 'Thawing Balhae' was now the subject of ridicule.

So it was like this.

Crockta and Jeremy even criticized them for being boring.

“Brother, are these the last ones?” Jeremy asked as he tied up the last Thawing Balhae member with a rope.

“It seems so.”

Crockta nodded. They had raided a building belonging to the Thawing Balhae Clan, and this was its last room. It was the third city hit after Chesswood. Jeremy's captive struggled as his body started to be bound.

He begged, “Please don't! How will I grow? I have money, so please...!”

“Shut up, this guy.”

Jeremy hit his back. Jeremy kept hitting him as the man kept

twisting without end.

Crockta shrugged. The user seemed like someone who worked hard to raise his character. His equipment was advanced and he was relatively strong in the clan. But Crockta and Jeremy were stronger.

Jeremy continued by kicking the man's face. He flew away, bleeding at the mouth. The man struggled to catch his breath and fell limp. Jeremy bound his body. Jeremy finished with the man and rose from his spot, wiping the sweat from his brow.

“Phew. There sure are a lot of them.”

All of the Thawing Balhae clan members were wriggling on the ground like worms behind Crockta and Jeremy. The door opened, revealing the messenger that Derek had dispatched.

“Thanks for the good work.”

Crockta didn't know how, but Derek said that he had made a big profit here. According to the man, Derek had arranged to gain control of the city simply by pushing the Thawing Balhae clan out of the area. Crockta didn't ask about the contents.

“Hey, is Boss doing well?” Jeremy asked. The man glanced at Jeremy and nodded. “Of course.”

“It's been a long time. Tell him I will return with a gift.”

“I understand. Boss Derek has also prepared a gift for you.”

“A gift from Boss? Should I be expectant? What is it?”

“I don’t know the details.”

Jeremy approached the man and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“The management of those cursed people is going well right?”

“Yes, don’t worry. Most of them have already been taken to the stars.”

When a user’s character disappeared completely, the NPCs expressed it as being ‘taken by the stars’. Most of the Thawing Balhae Clan members had been forced to delete their characters, create new ones, or quit the game.

“What is the next destination?” Crockta asked.

The man spoke respectfully to Crockta, “Crockta, there are no more.”

“Why?”

“The movements of the Thawing Balhae Clan have disappeared,

and the crowd has dispersed. They seemed to have disbanded.”

“...I see.”

“Yes. The Thawing Balhae Clan is over.”

The dissolution of Thawing Balhae had occurred in no time. Their bases and workplaces had been raided, so it was no wonder that they had disbanded.

Crockta walked to the window. The clan members were on the ground, but he didn't care and stepped all over them. When he reached the window, he could see the blue sky.

He opened the window and a cool breeze floated into the room. Crockta stared at the sky outside. He hadn't expected that his revenge for Lenox would come to an end so quickly, so soon. It was an unknown feeling.

“Is it really the end?”

“Yes, Crockta. Nothing is being hidden from you.”

Crockta suddenly looked at the man's face. The man continued speaking, “Maybe this is the inevitable result. You and Jeremy have cut off their limbs. This much is great.”

“I see.”

Jeremy whistled. “Brother, congratulations. In the end, didn’t you get your revenge?”

Crockta shrugged.

Revenge, had he really done it? He couldn’t catch Grom the traitor or the Thawing Balhae clan master who had allied with the NPC noble. If the clan was disbanded, then it would be more difficult to track them down. Crockta laughed bitterly.

It was only a half revenge. But the Thawing Balhae Clan had lost more than half. They didn’t care about what Crockta lost, so their situation was worthless to him.

For the time being, it would be good to rest. But this didn’t mean it was a complete end. On the day that they met again under the skies of Elder Lord, they would realize that the orcs had come back for revenge.

“Derek has this gift for you.”

The man handed over a piece of paper to Crockta with a city and address written on it. He also saw something that looked like a password. It seemed to be the contact method.

“If you want to chase the remnants of the clan, then use this. This is the method to contact an information guild. That is all we can do for you.”

“Thank you.”

Crockta put the piece of paper away. Anyway, this was a mutually benefiting deal. The rest was up to Crockta alone.

“Good job,” Crockta told Jeremy.

He laughed. “Brother really gave went through a lot of trouble. Your revenge, you did a pretty good job.”

“Are you going back to Derek?”

“Of course, my original position is beside Boss.”

“I see.”

Crockta walked over to Jeremy and quietly whispered in Jeremy’s ears, “You should be careful of Derek.”

“Huh?”

“Hounds will only be raised when they can be controlled. If they try to break the collar, then they will be silenced.”

“What are you talking about?”

“It doesn’t hurt to be careful.”

Crockta glanced somewhere else. The messenger sent by Derek was watching them whisper together. Crockta smiled and moved away. Then he hit Jeremy’s shoulder.

“Bul’tar! You went through a lot of trouble. Stay alive until we meet the next time. “

“Is this a parting? How depressing.”

“I’ll see you again someday.”

“Yes. Brother, come and see me in Anail one day.”

Jeremy stretched out his hand, as if he wanted a handshake, before stopping and grinning. He pushed out his fist in the orc manner.

“In fact, I wanted to try this once.”

Crockta grinned and bumped fists with Jeremy.

“Bul’tar! Is this right?”

“Wrong. There is nothing in your voice. More strength. Bul’tar!”

“Pfff, how funny. Yes, Bul’tar.” Jeremy laughed and dropped his fist. “Brother, will you be leaving now?”

Crockta nodded.

“That’s right. I should go.”

Jeremy slung his arm over Crockta and said to the man, “Take care of cleaning up this place. Brother, I’ll send you off.”

“Yes.”

Crockta and Jeremy left the room.

As they headed to the entrance of the building, they passed by Thawing Balhae Clan members struggling to get rid of their ropes. Some had already terminated their connection. Crockta and Jeremy smiled as they saw them.

They reached the entrance and exchanged glances. The two people firmly grasped hands. Their farewell wasn’t long, with only a short handshake and eye contact. They hit each other’s shoulders and turned in different directions before setting off, knowing that they would someday meet again.

Jeremy saw off Crockta and entered Thawing Balhae’s building

again. This place was now Derek's asset, and Derek's crew was cleaning up the remnants of the Clan.

The man that Derek sent came over to him saying, "Jeremy."

"Huh?"

"Here, a letter from the boss."

"A letter?"

The man handed a white envelope to Jeremy. As always, the white envelope was sealed with red candle wax that had Derek's mark on it. Jeremy opened it and whistled. The candle wax fell down.

"Hrmm... What do I have to do this time...?"

For a moment, Jeremy doubted his eyes. The contents were unexpected. He was about to open his mouth and say, 'what the hell is this' when he stopped.

'You should be careful of Derek.'

He recalled Crockta's voice. Even though he had yet to fully understand it, Jeremy's instincts prompted him to cover his face with a mask of calmness. Jeremy suppressed his wildly beating heart and smiled. He didn't expose his agitation and acted like he

had expected it.

“Indeed...”

His voice trembled. ‘Calm down, Jeremy.’

“As expected from Boss. He is thorough. Isn’t that right?”

“.....”

“The risk factor needs to be removed. That has always been the case.”

Jeremy laughed. He barely folded up the letter with his stiff hands. He placed the letter back in the envelope and put it away, still smiling. His face was smiling, but he was quickly analyzing the situation.

The letter that Derek sent to Jeremy was simple.

[Kill Crockta.]

Jeremy knew Derek well. This was a way of testing his subordinates. He shouldn’t show the slightest hesitation or confusion. He had to be a loyal dog, and one that refused to hunt would instantly be put down.

‘But why? Boss, why me?’

Jeremy realized it the moment he asked the question. He couldn't help laughing.

‘I see.’

The order to kill Crockta. Derek already had his suspicions and doubts, seeing right through Jeremy. Derek required thorough obedience. Jeremy had previously dealt with those who rejected Derek's orders as traitors.

Thus, Jeremy was able to understand Derek's decision. With this type of mindset, he wouldn't be able to complete the many injustices that Derek would order him to do in the future.

‘Indeed, Boss is really great.’ Jeremy thought. Derek could see through Jeremy's mind that he didn't even know himself.

But at the same time, he was offended. He handled everything as Derek's direct subordinate. He did it without any doubts. He thought that he was a special subordinate to Derek. He hoped to be more than just a dog.

It was his pride.

“Hey, Brother. Did Boss say anything to you?” Jeremy asked.

The man was confused, but Jeremy just grinned. “If I show any sign of surprise or objection, kill me immediately?”

“.....!”

The man’s eyes widened. The moment he was about to retreat, Jeremy’s sword pierced his neck, blood spraying out.

“Somehow, your neck is stiff like an old man’s.”

“Cough...”

The man collapsed.

Derek’s other subordinates surrounded Jeremy. Their momentum was overwhelming. They were strong.

Jeremy chuckled.

There was one thing that couldn’t be predicted. Jeremy’s body moved like the wind, one of the assailants collapsing in his wake. As the enemy’s formation collapsed, Jeremy knocked them down in turn, slain without any resistance. Jeremy’s eyes were cold as he cut the neck of the last assailant.

Jeremy was very strong. He became even stronger as he fought with Crockta.

This fact was beyond Derek's expectations. It was natural. Jeremy had been with Crockta for a while, not someone else. Derek's prediction was ruined by the orc warrior. Crockta was an unpredictable variable who kept changing the surroundings.

"If I'm with that orc brother, I have to be stronger."

It was necessary in order to stand beside such a reckless man. Jeremy took a deep breath and walked over to the window. He trampled on the cursed bodies and the dead ones without any care. As he reached the window, he could see the high, blue sky.

Jeremy stared at that long expanse.

"This is why that orc brother was standing here before."

After ending the Thawing Balhae Clan, Crockta had walked over to the window and to stare at the sky. Jeremy could now understand why.

"The sky is true."

Derek had abandoned him, and he had also abandoned Derek. The shackles holding him were released. Both Derek and the back alleys of Anail, restraints that had dominated his whole life, were now gone.

The world was far wider than he had ever known, now that his chains had been cut off.

Jeremy opened his arms. The wind blowing from outside wound around him.

Now he would be chased by Derek. He would also need to find a job. The only thing he knew how to do was use the sword. He had no family or friends. He was thrown into this world with only a sword.

“A person who doesn’t belong anywhere...”

Destiny was returned to his hands. There might be many enemies in the future.

Freedom.

Jeremy closed his eyes.

...Ecstasy.

Chapter 52 – Yiyu's Revenge (1)

Ian disconnected and emerged from the capsule. He contemplated on his play last night.

It was a long journey. He started at Orcrox, which was on the edge of the continent. It passed through Anail, Arnin, and Chesswood to the centre of the continent. He was now stronger than anyone who wasn't a ranker.

He also got revenge on the Thawing Balhae Clan. There would be a little delay as he searched for Hyunchul and the clan leader, but the crippling blow to the Thawing Balhal Clan had already been dealt.

He could now work on the reason why he began playing this game. The reason he started playing the game was for his sister Jung Yiyu. Her character was in the center of the continent, at one of the starting points for elves.

“That is the reason why I am playing the game, for Yiyu...”

Ian hummed before suddenly stopping.

“.....!”

This wasn't something he normally did.

He had hummed unconsciously because Jeremy was always making noises beside him. It was just like Iron, F4 the roleplaying group, and the orcs who played the game. Meeting all of those people had changed Ian in real life.

Ian started laughing. Change. It wasn't a bad feeling.

He stretched, afraid of becoming unhealthy after spending so much time in Elder Lord. He needed to move his body properly. Ian slowly moved. By the way, his body was softer than he thought. No, rather, it seemed more flexible than before.

Ian cocked his head. Somehow, strength was overflowing in him. What was this? Ian looked down at his hands before suddenly falling face-down to the ground. He put weight on both hands in a push-up stance and then slowly lifted his lower body from the ground.

Ian's mouth dropped open. It was a success. This type of body movement was called a Planche. He supported his body with only his arms and formed a straight position in the air, like Superman.

He hadn't thought that it would be possible after not exercising for a while. However, it actually seemed easier than before. Ian got up and pondered over his body. Maybe it was thanks to Elder Lord.

There was a similar reaction as one conducted image training, so maybe Elder Lord had that effect on the body as well.

Ian showered and left home. After dropping off some food at the café for Han Yeori and Yoo Sooyeon, he headed to Yiyu's university. It was lunch time so he thought he would buy her something delicious.

He contacted her and told her to wait in front of the cafeteria.

“Oppa.”

“You came?”

They entered the cafeteria.

Ian ordered a set of sushi and noodles. Yiyu loved sushi. When she was young, she had been impressed by the classic cartoon, ‘Mister Sushi King’, and dreamed of being a chef. Of course, she gave it up after realizing that she had no talent in cooking.

“Why did you come here all of a sudden? And you’re buying the meal as well?”

“It isn’t sudden, I’ve bought you a lot of meals.”

“You haven’t done it lately, so I thought you didn’t care about your little sister anymore. Have you been busy meeting that pretty sister?”

Ian smiled and poked Yiyu’s forehead with his fingers. She

frowned.

“Does it hurt?”

“It hurts,” Yiyu complained, and moving her gaze to her phone. She seemed to be messaging someone. Ian touched his chin.

This was good enough.

One year ago, Yiyu had been awkward with Ian. It had been seven years.

As soon as he became an adult, he received an exemption from military service due to having a minor dependent on him. He was then sent to the foreign troops through Baek Hanho's recommendation.

He sent and received letters, but he hadn't been able to communicate with her properly due to the circumstances of his unit, the time difference, and security issues. Yiyu was left at a relative's home and Ian supported her living expenses and tuition. Yiyu wasn't bullied, but she also didn't receive any love.

When Ian was discharged and returned to Korea last year, the 13 year old child had already become an adult.

Yiyu was unfamiliar with Ian.

She told her brother, whom she hadn't met in seven years, that she would get a job as soon as she graduated high school so that he didn't need to worry about her. It was regrettable, considering their past relationship, so he just told her to go to the school that she wanted to go to.

His father had always said to him,

‘Mother and Father are busy, so you have to protect your little sister. A brother and sister should be closer with each other than with their parents. You have to depend on each other until you die. It is the deepest family connection. So... You must protect Yiyu. I believe in you.’

Then there was his parents' funeral, who had died without even leaving a will. Ian didn't cry. He smiled and made a pledge towards his father's photo. ‘I won't let you down.’

He sometimes doubted if he was meeting his father's expectations, but the resolution of that time still remained in his chest.

“Oppa, why are you smiling like that?”

“.....”

“I-It hurts!”

Sometimes that resolution was shaken. The meal arrived and

Yiyu started eating the sushi.

“How’s school?”

“Good.”

“And your course feels right?”

“No... I don’t know.” Yiyu sighed. “Oppa, sometimes I wonder about my dream. I thought that I’d find it in the economics department, but I don’t know anymore.”

“Wasn’t it to become the sushi king?”

“Ah, not that.”

“You should do what you want.”

“I can’t always do what I want. I need talent.”

“Talent?”

“Yes. For example, even if all soccer players practice, that doesn’t mean they will be like Pele, Ronaldo, Maradona, and Messi.

Ian laughed. Yiyu raised her eyebrows. “What, what?”

“There is no need to be the best.”

“Then?”

“There are plenty of soccer players out there. You don’t have to be the best. Even if you can’t play, you can open a soccer school and coach. Or you can open a neighborhood gym.”

“I see...”

“You should just be happy as you do what you want.”

Yiyu looked at Ian with a strange expression before going back to swallowing her sushi. She gasped, “Ah, wasabi, wasabi. Spicy.”

Ian handed her some water which calmed her down as she drank the water.

“But Oppa, what if I don’t know what I like?”

“You don’t know?”

“Yeah, I don’t know. Under these circumstances, it looks like I just have to live and die.”

“It’ll be okay.”

“You always say that it’ll be okay.”

“If you want to live roughly, than you should just do it. No one will scold you.”

“You scold me for my failing grades.”

“That’s a formality.”

“Then I’ll keep doing it in the future, okay?”

“No.”

“Yes, yes.”

“No no no.”

“Che.”

The two concentrated on their meal for a while. It was delicious. Ian decided to come here with his part time workers next time. Ian cut to the chase.

“You, how is Elder Lord?”

“Huh?”

Ian coughed. “Hmm, I’m actually...”

“I quit.”

“Very high...what?”

“I quit Elder Lord.”

Ian looked at Yiyu. She didn’t even look at Ian as she slurped her udon. “I won’t play anymore.”

Ian hesitated because her face seemed really determined. “Why all of a sudden?”

“I just did.”

Ian recalled a childhood memory.

Whenever something bad happened, Yiyu would stay quiet at home. Ian would ask what happened, and she wouldn’t reply. Ian always had to coax the details out of her. If he kept asking, then she would eventually confess.

As Ian looked at her glum expression, he couldn’t help asking, “What’s going on?”

“I just don’t want to do it.”

“Tell me.”

“.....”

As soon as Yiyu closed her mouth, Ian grabbed her favorite tuna from the sushi set.

“Ah, what the?”

“You can’t eat until you speak.”

“Ah, why? How petty. Gimme.”

“Eat.”

“Okay, I understand.”

Ian gave her the tuna back.

“It’s just scary.”

“Scary?”

“Well...”

Yiyu was scared and weak. As she had told her friends, she had died to a rabbit. Therefore, she became a mystic to obtain spirits and carefreely roam around the world. One day, she encountered a group of users.

They were high level players that were normally not seen in the beginner's area. They noticed that she was shearing sheep alone with her spirits and approached. They told her that they were high level users, and that they would help her raise her level.

Yiyu rejected, but they kept at it, quickly becoming angry at her clear refusal.

Before attacking her, they exclaimed, “Ah, fuck. This bitch must have spent a lot of money on her customization. Does she think she's a real elf or something?”

Yiyu ran away as they laughed and chased her, as if they were hunting deer. Her spirits resisted, but they were eventually sent back to the spirit world, leaving Yiyu to fend for herself. Her assimilation rate was only 10%, so she didn't feel a lot of pain. However, after being tied up like a hunted animal, she didn't want to play Elder Lord anymore.

“I'm so sad about my poor kids being attacked,” Yiyu said. She called the spirits her kids. “At any rate, I don't want to play anymore because there are many strange people. I apologize for forcing Oppa to play and then quitting.”

“Why are you sorry? It’s okay.”

“Oppa shouldn’t play as well. Elder Lord is too tough. Don’t play that tough game and remain a café boss.”

Ian laughed. His sister didn’t seem to know that he was the toughest person around.

“Where were you?”

“Was it Maillard? Oppa, this is delicious. I want more.”

“I’ll go.”

He ordered more sushi for Yiyu.

Ian remembered the name Maillard. He also got a description of her attackers’ appearances and some other information from Yiyu. The only reason she told him all this was because he had added more tuna sushi to the plate.

Maillard was a city of elves located a little further from where Crockta currently was. Unlike Arnin, it was a place where other species were free to enter. Elves were able to choose from a variety of starting points, unlike the orcs. Maillard was a favorite starting point among beginners.

He would show them the wrath of an orc warrior.

Ian laughed.

“Yiyu?”

Someone suddenly called out her name. Ian raised his head.

Yiyu replied, “Uh, Yunji.”

“Wow, I didn’t expect to see you here. Are you eating lunch?”

“Yes. You as well?”

“Yes. It has been a while.”

It was Yiyu’s friend. She glanced at Ian. “Is he your boyfriend?”

“No, my brother.”

“Brother? Really?”

She looked at both Ian and Yiyu. “You do look alike. Hello, I am Yiyu’s friend, Jung Yunji.”

“Hello. I am Yiyu’s older brother.”

Ian greeted her. He spoke politely since she was Yiyu's friend. She came with another party, so a group of girls were waiting for her. Jung Yunji said goodbye to Yiyu and turned away. But Jung Yunji looked strangely familiar to Ian.

Her face was familiar. Her grouchy face complaining to Ian seemed to pop into his head for some reason. Ian frowned. Who was it? Where did he see her?

“Ah. I hate carrots.”

Yiyu spat out a piece of carrot as she ate the udon.

Carrot. Carrot...

‘Bah, will Ian's strength make a difference?’

“.....!”

‘Will it turn carrots into beef? You would be a wealthy merchant.’

Those words suddenly popped into his head. Ian looked back. He caught Jung Yunji's eyes as her friend nagged her.

“.....?”

She looked embarrassed by Ian's gaze and turned slightly pink. She shyly bowed her head and tucked her hair behind her ears.

"Why are you staring, are you interested in her?" Yiyu asked sharply. Ian shook his head and turned forward again.

"No."

"Then what is it?"

"She looks familiar."

"Hrm..."

Yiyu made a questioning sound, but Ian just put the sushi in his mouth. It was obvious why. He actually met her in reality, so he couldn't help feeling goosebumps.

But somehow, it felt like the back of his head was stinging.

Chapter 53 – Yiyu's Revenge (2)

Crockta entered the city.

Unlike the time when he was at Arnin, he wasn't stopped at the entrance.

This was a big city. Unlike last time, Crockta truly felt admiration. Elves flew in the sky on pegasuses, and a giant spirit walked around with an elf on its shoulder. The buildings were big and beautiful, with the architecture obviously being designed for the purpose of art.

This place was the city of elves, Maillard!

This city was considered to be the cradle of the elf users. A variety of jobs existed, and the level of the surrounding hunting area wasn't high, so they could start with ease. It was like heaven compared to Orcrox Fortress.

That was the problem.

Crockta shook his head. This was a very well organized place. Here, the elves would run on comfortable roads without knowing any hardships. If their bodies were comfortable, than their minds would weaken!

“Weak elves...!”

Crockta muttered with some pride. However, his eyes were attracted to the body of a beautiful elf passing by. He frantically shook his head. He needed to regain his spirit.

“Warriors don’t need women.”

Pain was what made a warrior stronger. He shouldn’t lose sight of that just for something temporarily sweet. In order to restore his mindset, he hummed the orc’s song.

“Warriors have no need for a woman...”

By the way, something was strange. Every time he passed by, the residents were staring at Crockta. Orcs weren’t rare in this place. This was a big city, so orcs occasionally passed by. The question was soon solved by another orc.

“.....!”

“.....!”

Crockta suddenly encountered an orc on the street. The orc’s eyebrows twitched as he discovered Crockta, promptly approaching him..

He was an orc warrior. Tattoos were engraved on his face and body, and Crockta could feel the strength coming from him. He extended his fist.

“You are alive, Crockta!”

“.....?”

How did the orc know his name?

“How?”

“An orc with a black bandana, and the tattoos of honor. Your reputation is spreading all over the continent! An honorable warrior! Bul’tar!”

Crockta bumped the orc’s fist.

“I am the orc Purast! I really admire you.”

“It is nice to meet you Purast. I’m not such a great orc.”

“What are you talking about? Rescuing people on the Arnin Plains, and revealing the hypocrisy of the Arnin politicians! You fought for the innocent victims of Chesswood!” He hit his chest. “In an era where many warriors have forgotten the laws of years past, you are a warrior worthy of admiration.”

“Well. I don’t deserve such praise.”

Crockta nodded. Then he heard whispers around him.

‘Crockta. That is the famous orc? The orc of justice? The honorary citizen of Arnin and Chesswood’s hero?’

Crockta’s shoulders went up. He had become stronger and his achievement points had also increased tremendously.

[Status Window]

‘Person Pursuing the Pinnacle’ Crockta, Orc Warrior

Level: 39

Achievement Points: 76510

Assimilation: 80%.

Abilities:

Orc Warrior’s Destructive Power (Rare)

Orc Warrior’s Recovery Power (Rare)

Leyteno’s Vigorous Greatsword Technique (Essence)

Combative Spirit (Essence)

Mind's Eye (Special)

Tattoos of Honour (Rare)

Crushing Roar (Rare)

The highest leveled user in Elder Lord known to date was at level 60. Despite the difficult to grow nature of the game, Crockta was growing at a tremendous rate. More than 400,000 users were admitted to the ranks of the high-level users.

Furthermore, he had two Essence ranked skills that were widely known as difficult to obtain. After the bloody battle in Chesswood, Indomitable Fighting Spirit had been upgraded to Combative Spirit. The repeated swinging of the greatsword as he caught the other clan members had also upgraded the previous skill to Leyteno's Vigorous Greatsword Technique.

This didn't even mention his assimilation rate. In the former [Elder Lord Times] segment, everyone had been shocked when they discovered that Kim Dalkwang's assimilation rate was 73%. But he had 80%! If it was only looking at assimilation rate, Crockta might be at the peak in Elder Lord.

The peak! What a wonderful word!

[Your reputation has spread through the world of Elder Lord.]

[The friendliness of any NPCs you meet will increase.]

[Purast is looking at you with respect.]

Purast chuckled and admired, “I heard that you were humble and intellectual for an orc, and it really is true. Really amazing! You truly aren’t an ordinary orc! Kuhaha!”

However, Crockta couldn’t accept his words. “What are you saying?” Crockta spoke with a firm expression. “Orc or not, nobody else can decide such a thing. It is only you who can self-discipline yourself!”

“.....!”

“Purast, the possibilities of the orcs are infinite!”

Purast looked at Crockta with surprise. That’s right. He was an orc, but he had prejudices against orcs.

It was similar to how he saw humans as ambiguous, elves as weak but fast, dwarves as dexterous, and gnomes as just little bastards! He had used his own yardstick to judge the world, but his eyes

were opened now that he met Crockta. He had gained enlightenment. He felt confident, like he could do anything.

Crockta said the following, “The instructor who taught me said this: Warriors aren’t born, but created.”

“He is...” Purast replied.

“The orc warrior instructor, Lenox.”

Purast exclaimed in a low voice, “Lenox...!”

Purast had also heard of his reputation. He had become a warrior through learning under an instructor outside of Orcrox. His instructor had been a disciple of Lenox. Lenox was the warrior instructor and a true warrior.

“Lenox! I’ve heard the news. Those dirty humans...!”

“I will get revenge for him.”

“Revenge!”

“A warrior pays back each favor or act of vengeance.”

“Indeed...” Purast grabbed Crockta’s hand. “You truly are an honorable orc.”

Crockta nodded. He had to admit that he thought that he was a wonderful orc. Thus, Crockta and Purast talked for a while.

“It was an honor to meet you.”

Crockta and Purast bumped fists.

“Let’s live and see each other again. Bul’tar!”

“Bul’tar!”

Crockta parted from Purast and continued walking. He felt even prouder. The beautiful elves were staring at him. Crockta puffed up his chest.

‘Look elves, this is an orc warrior.’

“Really scary.”

“Let’s lower our eyes.”

“The orc of justice is also ugly.”

“I’m lucky that it isn’t nighttime right now.”

The elves whispered to each other as they watched Crockta.

Anyway, Crockta was here because of Yiyu. His little sister, revenge for Yiyu! If such a diabolical group appeared, it was clear that Yiyu wouldn't be the only victim. Those people would repeat the same actions. This was because people didn't change easily.

Suddenly, Crockta halted.

“Don't change...”

Do people really not change? They didn't 'change' easily.

At one time, he believed that people would never change. But now he knew. People changed. They could change.

“A person can be anything,” Crockta muttered.

There was a time when he madly wanted change. He thought that it wasn't possible, so he had felt despair. But he had changed. If a person had the will, they could be who they wanted to be. That was what it meant to be a human being.

“You will also change.” Crockta would meet the ones who harassed Yiyu and rehabilitate them.

“Um...?”

Crockta stopped in his tracks.

It was a mirror shop. Mirrors were expensive things that couldn't be easily seen in Elder Lord. There were beautiful elf females tidying up their appearance, and then the ridiculous figure of the orc behind them.

Crockta looked at his reflection in the mirror.

An orc wearing a black bandana! He wore leather armor that revealed his thick muscles and carried a huge greatsword on his back. Furthermore, many intricate tattoos were covering his entire body.

Crockta nodded. It was the very nice appearance of a warrior. However, he wanted to be even greater.

“I’ve been fighting for a while.”

He decided it was time to shop for a change.

“I am alive.”

“Ah, hello.”

The elf clerk was confused by the appearance of the customer. She operated a clothing store for various species. With the exception of elves and humans, it was a place to sell fashion items for dwarves, orcs, and gnomes.

Naturally, the orc this time was also a customer. However, this was the first time that she had ever seen an orc with tattoos all over his body and a rough appearance, as if he had just come out from the battlefields. She froze as she met his intense gaze.

“What are you looking for...?”

The orc stood in front of a mirror instead of answering. The orc touched his chin and looked at himself in the mirror for a while. He seemed to nod with satisfaction. Then he said, “Great...”

“Great...?”

“Headband.”

In the meantime, the orc Crockta had been using a bandana with the mark of the Blacksmith company. Now it was time to throw it away. He was going to buy a headband to cover the star on his forehead.

The elf clerk calmly put out a variety of headbands which were typically used by adventurers to prevent sweat from flowing down their foreheads. Crockta chose his favorite, a red headband, among the array of headbands.

“The point is that it is red. Isn’t that right?”

“Huh? Yes...”

“Give me this.”

“Three silver.”

“Yes.”

It was cheap. Crockta tied the headband at once. There was plenty of room to fit around an orc’s head.

“Isn’t it great?”

“Of course.”

The female elf didn’t say that it looked like the headband had turned red from all the blood. He looked even more evil after taking off the black bandana and donning the red headband.

“How great.”

“.....”

“Please throw this away.”

The bandana from the Blacksmith Company was thrown in the trash can. Crockta stepped out of the clothing store, now with a red headband, instead of a black bandana, covering the star on his forehead. The orc's wild hair seemed to double his wild charm.

People glanced at Crockta.

Crockta headed to the armor store and bought a set of equipment that was more expensive than his existing leather armor. The base was made of leather, but iron plates padded the important parts, upgrading his defense.

He also bought gauntlets and boots to protect his hands and feet, and there was also a belt where he could hang daggers.

He looked like a whole new orc. He had completely thrown off the appearance of a beginner, and now looked like a seasoned orc warrior!

Finally, he headed to the blacksmith to check if the greatsword, ‘Ogre Slayer’, needed any repairs. The dwarf blacksmith's eyes shone as he received it.

“This...!”

It was made of the adamantium alloy that was unique to the Golden Anvil Clan. The blacksmith could see it straight away, since

only the Golden Anvil Clan could handle adamantium so skillfully.
“Are you a friend of the Golden Anvil Clan?”

“I’m not. My friend is a business partner of the Golden Anvil Clan, so I received this sword.”

“It was a long time ago that the orcs received weapons from the Golden Anvil Clan. Okay, I’ll do it nicely. Expect it.”

The dwarf got to work. After checking the greatsword, Crockta also bought a pair of daggers and two sets of leather armor in case of emergency.

He felt reborn as he carried the greatsword on his back.

He had run this far. Under Lenox, he had taken the path to become a warrior, and had been involved in various incidents after leaving Orcrox. Now he felt like he had become a true orc.

Crockta straightened his chest and walked.

This was why a big city was good. He could see many high quality equipment and goods that he hadn’t seen in the many villages and cities that he had already passed. Crockta finally headed to a general store to buy potions.

“.....!”

They met again. The Blacksmith Company! The Blacksmith branch in Maillard.

The man called Blacksmith would be a rich man. Branches of the Blacksmith Company were present everywhere he went. Crockta believed in the Blacksmith Company and went inside; however, he instantly turned away.

“.....!”

No, why was she here?

Crockta took a deep breath.

“Uh, Customer? Come in, come in. Don’t hesitate.” The familiar voice caught Crockta. Crockta didn’t move, but her hand grabbed his arm and started pulling. “Orc, do you need potions? Or a knife? What do you need? I sell everything, everything.”

It was Stella. The intern of the Blacksmith Company whom he sold vegetables with in Anail, Stella! Moreover, Crockta was convinced that Stella was Yiyu’s friend. Crockta was worried as he slowly turned around.

“.....?”

But Stella just cocked her head.

“What is it? Did you want to ask something? Oh, I’m sorry, but I don’t care what species you are.”

She didn’t recognize Crockta.

Ian realized why. After going through the warrior’s ritual, he had become bigger and had even gained tattoos. The present Crockta looked completely different from the orc beginner Ian. She didn’t recognize him.

How lucky. Crockta spoke in a different tone.

“Hmm hmm, I came to buy potions...”

“There are a lot of potions. Come in.”

The Blacksmith Company’s branch in Maillard was a big deal. She had ended up being promoted. Her name badge said ‘Stella, Manager’. Maybe not all of it was due to him. Crockta inwardly laughed.

Thus, Crockta tried to buy a pile of potions.

“Wait.”

“.....?”

“I want to ask you one thing.”

Stella told Crockta. Crockta thought his identity had been discovered and flinched.

“What do potions mean to you?”

“.....?”

“I am an honorable manager, Stella. I will only sell potions to adventurers who understand the value of potions.”

“.....”

“Now, tell me!”

Stella... No, Yunji. No. He couldn't.

Crockta turned around with saying anything.

“Uh, uh, excuse me! Aren't you buying?”

“.....”

“I'll cancel it. I just wanted to try it. Here are the potions!”

“.....”

“No! Discount! Discount! I’ll give you a discount! Okay?”

Crockta turned back around. Thus, Crockta bought potions at a discounted price from Stella.

‘Why didn’t it work’...he heard Stella grumble.

“I’ll ask you one thing,” Crockta said in a serious tone. “Do you know any evil people who are picking on the weak in the area?”

Stella would’ve heard the rumors. She frowned at Crockta’s question. “Perhaps...are you talking about those people?”

“Those people?”

“Female users...no, there are those going after females who are cursed by the stars.”

“That’s right.”

“Why? Perhaps...”

Stella looked at the big greatsword on his back. Crockta nodded.

“I can’t let them go.”

Stella felt admiration.

“Wow, orc warrior. How amazing. Then, I will help. My friend was also hurt by them.”

She seemed to be talking about Yiyu. However, it didn't seem like she was that close to Yiyu. What was the reason for exchanging greetings at the cafeteria?

Speaking of which, he didn't know that much about Yiyu's school life. He had a vague idea from the police station incident but didn't know what she was like outside that..

It would be good to find out ore.

“Okay.”

“Then we will go when I am off from work!”

Thus, Ian and Yunji—Crockta and Stella—accompanied each other for their own purposes.

Chapter 54 – Yiyu's Revenge (3)

Crockta watched what Stella was doing.

She was hunting the surrounding animals with beginner's equipment. She aimed a dagger at a deer. However, she missed. It didn't move properly and just hit the air. The deer headbutted her like she was annoying, causing her to fall down.

“Euh...”

He could now believe that Yiyu died from a rabbit. This was the level of a novice user. Stella wasn't a novice; however, she was a merchant, meaning she didn't have combat skills. Furthermore, her assimilation rate was low. Unlike Ian, her head and body acted separately.

Ian realized the importance of assimilation rate. She was demonstrating motor skills that were below her original skills in reality. Her assimilation rate was 40%, meaning that only 40% of her abilities could be used. A low assimilation rate meant she wasn't properly connected with the world of Elder Lord.

In the end, the deer left. Stella got up and went to find another prey. Crockta hid in the bushes and followed her. The two of them were luring those men who were after female users. If Stella seemed like a novice user, then they would appear. Once they showed up, he would punish them. It was a very simple plan, but there were still no signs of them.

Gradually, the sky darkened. Stella spoke up, “Excuse me, should I continue?”

“.....” Crockta emerged. “Let’s end it here for today.”

“Yes. Tomorrow is a day off so we can continue then.”

They headed back towards Maillard. Light from the big city seeped over the wall. Their location was the forest outside Maillard, a hunting ground for beginners. Sometimes they encountered other beginners and greeted them. The users were amazed to see the orc.

“How is your friend?”

“Who?”

“Your friend that they attacked.”

“Ahh...” Stella nodded. “I’m not very familiar with her. Just...”

Crockta listened closely.

“Rather than a friend...”

“Rather...?”

“Not long ago, I met her brother and he is handsome.”

“.....”

“So I want to be friends with her. He also seemed interested in me. No, we greeted each other with our eyes. Isn’t that a green light? What can I do?”

Crockta nodded with a distorted expression. “Ah, yes...”

“That reminds me, I have an orc friend called Ian. Do you know him?”

Crockta shook his head. He thought that it was best to not get caught.

“Indeed, that person is a user. What about Crockta? An orc should also have relationships. Is Crockta dating anyone?”

A love relationship.

Crockta’s eyes became distant. There was someone he once loved. What was she doing now? Was she still on the battlefield surrounded by the sound of gunshots? Assault rifles and rocket launchers suited her personality.

The moment that Crockta was about to recite an epic poem about love that blossomed on the battlefield...

“Hey, isn’t this a nice picture?”

“This is the first time I’ve seen a female with an orc.”

Stella jumped. Crockta shifted his gaze. It was the appearance of three men with good equipment. Crockta immediately used Mind’s Eye.

[Mind’s Eye’s (Special) has opened.]

[They covet the female user by your side! They are stronger than average users, but garbage compared to you.]

[Cook them as you please.]

[They won’t convert with just a few words.]

[Inflict justice!]

Even the system was hoping for their punishment. Crockta felt the energy of the universe enveloping him. The revelation of the world telling him to get rid of them!

“Huhu, isn’t this orc quite ugly?”

“He’s just another orc mob that we can catch.”

“He’ll give good us experience. Kuhahaha!”

They burst out laughing.

“Girl, are you a novice?”

“Huh?”

“Play with us and we’ll boost your level. Don’t play with this scary fellow. Are you dating? Surely orcs aren’t to your taste?”

“Hey, that’s going too far.”

They sniggered again.

Crockta’s fists trembled as he listened to their words. They also used such remarks to harass his sister. He recalled his father’s voice,

‘You must protect your little sister.’

He wasn’t a god, and couldn’t take care of all of Yiyu’s hardships, but at the very least, he could get revenge on these guys. It was his duty.

“Girl, did you turn off dating mode?”

“Perhaps you’re not satisfied with this orc?”

He wouldn’t hear any more of these garbage remarks! Crockta’s fist moved like it was on fire.

“Kuheeooooook!”

The face of the man in front was distorted by Crockta’s punch and he flew into the sky, spinning in the air and landing on the ground.

Thud!

“... Urgh!”

“What, Moore!”

They jumped. They couldn’t believe their eyes.

Orcs were a strong species, that was fact. But they were stronger. Due to spending a long time leveling up and acquiring skills, they were able to hunt orcs like orcs were monsters. However, the overwhelming force that instantly took care of them was at a ranker level! This orc wasn’t a typical monster or NPC, but a particularly strong one. They were stunned.

The man who was struck by Crockta's fist was not vomiting up blood on the floor.

"Your dirty mouths..."

Crockta recalled what his sister said.

"Ah fuck. This bitch must have spent a lot of money on her customization. Does she think she is a real elf?" was what they said.

Now Crockta was certain. These dog bastards had said things that were way more terrible than that. Crockta formed fists and approached them.

They backed away as they saw the huge orc in front of them. However, Crockta grabbed the neck of the one in front and held the man's body up in the air. The opponent swung his fist to resist, but Crockta just grabbed the fist with his other hand. Then he twisted the hand that he held.

The man groaned in pain and shouted, "Wahh! I-It hurts!"

If he felt that much pain, his assimilation rate seemed to be over 50%. Crockta laughed. The Crockta headbutted him, scattering blood and teeth everywhere. Blood also splattered on Crockta's face. Drops of blood covered the red headband that he bought. The red headband was wet from the blood, and really looked like it had

been dyed in blood.

“M-Monster.”

“Monster?”

Crockta laughed and threw the guy to the ground. He walked towards the remaining person. “No.”

“Euh...”

“You are the monsters.”

The man swung his sword at Crockta, who immediately pulled out his greatsword and struck the sword in defense.

Kang!

The opponent’s sword was broken.

“.....!”

This was the Essence ranked weapon from the Golden Anvil Clan, Ogre Slayer! The strength of the sword was reinforced by Leyteno’s Vigorous Greatsword Technique! The orc’s strength and power!

This was the result of the combination. The man stared blankly at his broken sword. Crockta approached him. His opponent completely gave up as he stared blankly up at Crockta. The man had lost.

“Those who have been cursed by the stars.”

“.....!”

“I have a tool to prevent you from entering the world of Elder Lord again... but I have decided to rehabilitate you instead.”

Crockta's fist flashed again. The man flew through the air.

And Stella was staring at this scene with wide eyes. She was initially confused after first meeting the men. Their equipment and atmosphere indicated they were at a much higher level than she expected. The orc NPC was strong but she thought it would be hard for him to deal with three of them at once.

But the orc had swept through all of them like the wind. The men were now trembling and trying to get away from the orc. Great power! Maybe he was a named ranking NPC!

Stella instinctively thought that she had to join hands with this orc. Her merchant's instincts were telling her that she should make a connection with this man. This was an opportunity. However, she couldn't speak as Crockta gathered the men and beat them up in turn, so she just watched from behind.

Crockta subdued the men and gagged them in order to prevent their suicide. After removing all of their weapons, he tied them up with rope.

“Hup hup! Hup hup!”

“Ufff!”

“Be quiet.” Crockta formed a fist.

“.....”

It became silent. The orc’s fierce face looked down at them. It was nighttime. The moonlight shining through dark night cast clear shades on his face. He looked like an evil spirit.

“I think that all orcs... No, I believe in the possibilities of every person.”

“.....”

“...Hup hup.”

“Hup...”

“I mean... I believe that everyone can change. This orc believes

that trash like you can become socially acceptable people after receiving enlightenment. In other words, I might be called an optimistic orc.”

“Hup...!”

“Hup hup.”

“.....”

“Quiet. Do you want to be stopped from entering this world again?”

“.....”

“.....”

“.....”

“That’s right.”

Crockta turned towards Stella. Stella discovered that the fires of madness were burning in Crockta’s eyes.

“Look. They are quiet.”

“Yes...”

“The rehabilitation has begun. Kilkilkil.”

Stella thought, ‘Dangerous. This orc, his eyes are...!’

“They dare to speak such dirty words to my sister... No, harassing other people...I can’t allow it.” Crockta tied the three people together and started dragging them towards Maillard. “Stella, thank you again. I’ll express my gratitude later.”

“Huh?”

“I have to go rehabilitate them.”

Crockta then walked towards the city lights of Maillard. The three men groaned as they were dragged along the ground.

Stella stared at him and thought of Nietzsche’s words, ‘If you gaze long into the abyss, the abyss will gaze back.’

She hoped that those guys would survive the abyss that was the orc Crockta and be rehabilitated safely.

Crockta brought the men to a strange place. It was Maillard’s back alley. It was like a deserted city.

Was everyone here killed by mice? Of course, that wasn't possible. Rather, the men wanted to be killed. However, this orc was familiar with those cursed by the stars and users. He tied and gagged them to prevent death and resurrection.

"If you try to do something stupid, I'll hand you over to someone who specializes in this."

"....."

"Nod like you understand."

The men nodded. Their characters and equipment were a great asset when converted into cash. They could earn a huge amount of money for it. They couldn't just let it fly away.

"I know that you aren't actually bad people," The orc said in a loud voice. The men were confused. Why was the orc saying all of a sudden?

"Take a look at that."

The orc pointed to a corner of the alley. There was a house-like structure made of wooden planks. It wouldn't be strange to call it a doghouse. There were children inside, children of the slums. Dark parts existed, even in a bustling city like Maillard. Rather, the light actually cast the darkness deeper into the shadows.

Soon, they could hear the conversation from inside the shack.

“Yuri, is it cold?”

“Yes... Brother.”

“Put this on.”

“Brother?”

“I’m not cold.”

It wasn’t like a normal children’s conversation. It seemed like the older brother had given his sister his coat. The boy was a child who wasn’t even 10 years old yet. The boy’s legs trembled, but he stood strong in front of his sister.

“Eat this.”

“Bread? Where did you get it?”

“I worked hard and an uncle gave it to me.”

“Really?”

The body of the boy who replied was extremely thin. The girl looked at her brother as she gnawed on a little bit of the bread. The

girl stopped when she heard a growling sound from her brother's stomach. The boy gestured to eat, like it was okay. The girl eventually ate all the bread.

She smiled widely and said, "Delicious."

"Once I am bigger, I will make more money and buy you something even more delicious."

"Even more delicious?"

"Do you know about pizza?"

"Pizza?"

"Yes. On a piece of flat bread, things like meat, vegetables, and cheese are placed..."

"Wahhhh."

"It's delicious."

"Really?"

"I'll buy it for you."

"Yes!"

Crockta glanced at the three men. They were quietly gazing at the scene while tied up and gagged.

“You.”

Crockta released one of the men from his restraints.

“.....?”

“If you run, then it is over for the two of them.”

“.....”

“Answer me.”

“Yes, yes.”

“Then,” Crockta pulled out a gold coin from his pocket, “give this to the children.”

“.....?”

“Give it. And talk to them.”

The man nodded at Crockta’s fearsome expression. Then he

walked over to the children. He didn't know what was going on but it couldn't be helped. The children hid in the shack at the appearance of a strange man.

“Excuse me...kids?”

“.....”

“I won't hurt you, so will you come out for a second?”

The boy stuck out his head. His eyes were wary.

“That...” The man extended the shining gold coin. The child's eyes widened.

“.....?”

“I'm giving it to you.” The man grabbed the hesitant child's hand and forcibly handed it over. He then looked into the shadow of the alley where the orc was. But it didn't look that dark here.

“Why...?” The boy's eyes trembled. This gold would be enough for him and his sister to survive for two months.

“This isn't my gift...”

“Thank you.”

The boy bowed his head. Whether the reason was sympathy or something else, the boy knew how important money was. Charity was fine for himself and his sister.

“.....”

“I don’t know why you did this, but I really appreciate it. I’m not in a situation where I can refuse this...”

The boy bowed his head several times. The man didn’t know what to do and just scratched his cheek.

“That...”

“Really, thank you!”

The girl emerged because of the fuss. The boy made the girl bow.

“Brother...?”

“Say hello.”

“Yes...?”

“Say thank you.”

“Yes. Thank you...”

“Thank you!”

What was this? The man felt an unknown sense of shame and wanted to leave this place. “I-I am going.”

“Wait a minute.” The boy grabbed the hem of his clothing. “Thank you. I will never forget this. Your name...”

“.....”

The man looked at the boy, whose eyes were watery with tears. The man had never seen such light in another’s eyes before. The man couldn’t look anymore and shifted his gaze.

“Kid.”

“Yes.”

“That...” He chose to speak but he didn’t know what to say. “That...It might be hard...”

“.....”

“...If you work hard, a good day will come.”

It was the best that he could say. The man also hadn't lived an easy life. It was tough and he had endured many moments as an adult where he wanted to cry.

The boy closed his mouth and nodded. Then he energetically replied, "Yes!"

The man turned around. The voices of the children thanking him seemed to echo through the alley. It was just a mission to give one coin, so why did his mind feel so heavy? Once he got back, the orc was watching him, while his two colleagues were silent. They were just looking at him strangely.

The orc tied him up again. The man didn't rebel as he was tied up and as the gag filled his mouth.

"....."

They were quiet. The orc stood up again. Crockta dragged them towards another place.

Chapter 55 – Yiyu's Revenge (4)

“Do you have a dream?” The female elf asked.

The man panicked as he replied, “Dream?”

“Yes. A dream.”

He looked around. He couldn't see either the orc or his colleagues since they were hiding. He was being held hostage with two of his friends by a brutal orc. One of his friends was even ordered to give the children of the slums a gold coin, and he actually did it.

This time, the orc instructed him to sit in front of an elf and have his portrait drawn. There was an elf painting portraits of people in the square. Even though it was only 50 bronze, there was no one in front of the elf. It seemed like he was her only customer.

“I was actually trying to be a magician.” The elf said.

“Magician?”

“My grades weren't bad, so I entered an academy. I studied well.”

“Then why...?”

‘Why are you painting here?’ He swallowed down those words.

“But I wanted to paint. When I was a child, I saw Marcus’ ‘Keltas Temple’ painting hanging in a museum.”

“Yes...”

“The shock I received at that time is still vivid. I looked at that painting and thought. One day, I want to draw something that gives other people an impression like that. Let’s do what I want to do.”

The man nodded. A dream. He once had such a thing. It was impractical compared to the elf’s dream. His dream had been to become a warrior of justice in order to defeat the villains. There was still a picture from childhood of himself wearing a cloak in a corner of his house.

“How about you, do you have a dream?” The elf asked again.

“Dream...it is strange...”

“What’s wrong with it? Isn’t it absurd that I want to become a great artist like Marcus?”

The elf’s eyes flashed as she looked at him. There was a fresh smell coming from the elf. The beauty of the elf really disarmed him. He confessed to those beautiful blue eyes.

“A warrior who defeats the bad guys...” Then he looked away. The elf nodded seriously instead of laughing, like he had expected.

“I see. It’s a nice dream.”

“.....!”

“There are many bad people in the world. I wish that you will become a nice guy who will help them.”

The elf artist placed her pencil back on the canvas. “It is almost done.”

The elf continued drawing. The man started thinking with a complicated head. Not everyone could have a dream, and not everyone could achieve their dream. He had forgotten about that dream for a long time.

“Now, it’s finished!”

The elf handed over the picture. The picture wasn’t an ordinary portrait. His face wasn’t very big. However, he was wearing body armor, and was pointing a shining sword towards a dragon. In the picture, he didn’t have the tired face that he sported now. He was pointing the sword with clear eyes.

“This...”

“You didn’t know? I don’t just draw the face.” The elf grinned. “What should I do? I don’t give refunds.”

“No. Thank you.” The man held the drawing in his arms. Somehow, it was hard for him to stay any longer. “Thank you.”

“Yes. Please live the life you’ve dreamed of. Fighting!”

The man felt an unknown emotion as he turned around. Just like the donation made by his colleague, he wasn’t sure what this was meant to do, so he just left. Just go away.

But something lingered in his heart. His steps slowed down and he stopped walking. Something, he would feel regret if he continued walking. He just wanted to say one thing. The impulse grew until the man turned around.

He walked back to the elf and said, “Painter.”

“Eh? Yes?”

The artist’s eyes widened. The man opened his mouth and said, “The thing you said earlier, about how it’s absurd that you will become a great painter like Marcus...”

The man faced the elf and stared straight into her eyes. “I don’t think that it is absurd. You will be sure to become one. You will become a great painter one day.”

The elf's eyes shook. She flashed him a beautiful smile, like a flower blooming in the spring. It was a dazzling sunny face that he had never seen before.

“Thank you.”

The man turned around. He headed to the corner of the square where the orc and his two colleagues were hiding. He couldn't say anything.

“You came back?”

“.....”

The orc asked, “The picture, will you show it to me?”

The man showed them the picture without speaking. The orc nodded. His two tied up colleagues looked at the picture for a while before dropping their heads.

The man once again became the orc's captive, but he didn't feel like resisting. The three attackers were tied back together and dragged by the orc towards another place.

It was the third time. He had to do a mission after his two

colleagues. This time, it was at a temple complex.

Those who followed the Goddess of Mercy set up buildings for the sickly and those in need. The people in charge were surprised to see the orc dragging in some men, but after a few words of conversation and donations, the group was let in.

The place that the orc headed to was the innermost, secret place of the temple. It was a hospice where the elderly stayed, the place where those who were about to die were taken.

“10 minutes,” The orc asked. “Talk to them politely for 10 minutes.”

“.....”

“This is the last one.”

“Understood. I will do it.”

The man started moving. The orc and his two colleagues sat outside the room to listen to his conversation. The man wouldn't become passionate like his two friends. He firmly decided that he wouldn't be touched by the orc's missions.

Besides, everyone died when they were old. It was the natural flow of life. Moreover, he couldn't feel any sympathy towards the NPCs in a game. It was enough if he listened to the grieving lament of an old man.

However, he had to stop moving soon after he entered the room. A boy was lying in the room and looking at him. The boy set down the book he was reading on his chest and laughed at the stranger's visit.

“Hello.”

“.....”

“Please sit down.”

The boy pointed to a chair nearby. The man hesitantly sat down beside him. He never thought that it would be a little kid.

“What brings you here? I heard you wanted to talk for a few minutes.”

“Well...”

“It's okay. People like you often come, wanting to know the mindsets of those who will die soon.” The boy's expression was bright, despite his previous words. “What are you? An adventurer?”

“I...”

In the world of Elder Lord, he was just a bad guy who hunted to

make money and harassed other users.

The words in his mind didn't emerge from his mouth. The boy stared at him. When a person stared at him like this, it was hard to distinguish between game and reality, especially when it was a sentimental situation like this.

Thus, he unknowingly told the truth, "I am a bar owner."

In reality, he operated a bar.

"Ah, I thought you were an adventurer, based on your clothing."

"What...?"

"It must be hard to own a bar. You know, people who are drunk can be violent...sometimes they even break..."

That's right.

It was a hassle to deal with the drunk customers. Most of them just quietly drank their beverages, but he was always mentally tired because of the occasional incidents. Receiving smiles only once or twice a day was also annoying.

Therefore, he relieved his stress in Elder Lord. The anonymous wicked acts gave him a strange pleasure.

“I didn’t know I would be like this.”

“.....”

“I was on my way to school like usual, only to open my eyes in a medical ward. I was told that I have an incurable disease.”

It was obvious. This was a story he always saw on reality television. But why was his chest so heavy?

Yes, this was because of mirror nerves. There were mirror neurons that allowed him to sympathize with the boy after seeing him directly, allowing him to become more involved in the kid’s story. It was a physical reaction. Don’t pay attention to it.

The boy asked, “Do you know what I regret the most?”

“...What is it?”

“Can you guess?”

The man replied, “Well, things you’d like to do if you were healthy again? For example, eat something delicious or get a girlfriend. Things like this.”

The boy burst out laughing, shaking his head. “No. I don’t regret anything like that.”

“Then?”

“I regret the fact that I wasn’t more loving to my parents, my friends, and the people around me.”

“.....”

“I had a bitter fight with my friend the day before I collapsed. I complained to my parents that my breakfast wasn’t good. I didn’t say thank you to a great friend. I regret those things.”

The man moved his gaze. “I see.”

“Eating delicious foods or getting better grades, I don’t regret anything like that.” The boy grinned. “Mister should think about it as well. What do you really want to do if you don’t have much time left? What would you regret if you had no time left?”

The man had no answer for the boy. His last moments. It wouldn’t be nice.

The man got up from his seat without saying anything further. That orc bastard, he was doing a good job.

The man wasn’t such a pushover. The man turned around. He didn’t stop moving, despite feeling the boy’s gaze on his back.

‘Think about it. What would you regret?’

He suddenly stopped at the boy's words. Regret. Some things couldn't be reversed, and the most irreversible thing was death and parting.

The man had a thought. If he left this way, then he would regret it. Maybe he would regret this moment in the distant future. That thought was his answer. The man slowed down. Eventually, he stopped just before leaving the room.

Then he said to the boy, "Kid."

"Yes."

"Do you believe in Heaven?"

Looking back, the man saw that the boy was smiling. "No."

"You are an old child."

The man looked at the boy's smiling face and eventually smiled back. "Hey."

"Yes."

"There is a Heaven up there." This was the only comfort the man could give. "I'll see you there."

The boy laughed brightly. “Yes.”

A man left the room. When he closed the door, he saw the orc and two colleagues waiting in the dark corridor. His colleagues were released from their ties.

“Let’s go.” The orc said. They quietly followed behind the orc.

They were completely released from their binds, but they walked straight behind the orc.

The orc’s back was the most prominent sight. They thought that he was just an ignorant orc with strength. They knew they would be tortured. However, he only gave them three requests and released them after it was over.

The orc stopped. They were standing in front of the fountain in Maillard’s square. People were passing by with smiles and stiff faces. In the city where the lights didn’t go up at night, people were experiencing their own circumstances.

“There is a legend about this fountain.”

The orc said, “If you throw a coin into the fountain, your wish will come three.”

The orc laughed. “Everybody throw a coin.”

This time he didn’t give them coins. The moment they were each taking out a coin...

The orc said, “The legend was created in the temple. They will collect the coins thrown in the fountain and use it for those who have difficulties and those who need help, like the people you met tonight.”

“.....”

“I will be the first.”

The orc took out a shining gold coin. It was a large amount of money equivalent to 100 silver. The poor could live on that money for two months without worrying at all. The orc threw it.

“Now it is your turn.”

“.....”

The men took out coins and threw them towards the fountain. They made a wish together with the orc. He didn’t ask them what their wishes were. The orc looked at the men with a profound gaze.

“It is up to here.” The orc spoke, “Whatever evil you have done thus far, I know that you aren’t really bad guys.”

The three men couldn’t open their mouths. The orc’s eyes gazed at them in turn. “I’ll see you again someday. Until then, stay alive.”

The orc turned around.

One of the men shouted towards the orc’s receding back.

“Wait!”

The orc stopped.

“Let me know your name.”

The orc looked back towards them and declared, “Crockta.”

“.....!”

He left just like that.

The men stood frozen in place. The name Crockta, they had heard of it before.

It was a famous name in the Elder Lord community. He was an

orc of justice who appeared out of nowhere, and did things that others couldn't do. Some people called him an event NPC, specifically created by the game publishers.

But that couldn't be. Such a great NPC wouldn't spend a strange night with them like this. Just like the NPCs with their own stories that the men met this evening, this orc was a resident of the world of Elder Lord, with his own life and ideals.

Their own unique and special lives.

“Crockta...”

The men chewed on his name before turning around. They didn't talk to each other. Each one of them were thinking about the things they experienced today. Then suddenly, one of the men asked a NPC standing next to him, “Excuse me, can I ask you something?”

“Huh?”

“Is there a legend about throwing the coin in the fountain and making a wish?”

“.....?” The elf passing by laughed. “What are you talking about? There's nothing like that. It's just a fountain.”

“.....”

“Why would anyone throw money in there?”

The three men were stunned as the NPC left. Then they started laughing. It was a refreshing laugh, compared to the nasty smiles they sent Yiyu and Stella.

The three men moved away from the square’s fountain.

In the place they left, the fountain, four gold coins shone brightly, adding another bright light to Maillard’s wonder.

Chapter 56 – To The North (1)

There were legendary orc warriors who came to Lenox's funeral.

The news that one of them, Anya, cut off the head of a human Earl spread across the continent. Anya the mad slaughterer. She infiltrated the castle with her brutal warriors while he was sleeping and cruelly ripped the Earl apart.

After cutting his head off, she left a message in his blood.

[Revenge.]

Only this one word. Once it was reported, it was regarded as an emergency in the loose coalition of cities in the human kingdom.

At the same time, it was rumored that the Thawing Balhae Clan were disbanded by an orc who got revenge for Lenox's death.

The incident involving the Thawing Balhae Clan in Arnin wasn't known throughout the world. However, they observed that the orc Crockta played a crucial role in Chesswood, and that Crockta continued to hunt the rest of the Thawing Balhae clan members into extinction. As the Thawing Baelhae Clan disappeared without a sound, the details remained a mystery.

A clan of users was broken by a single NPC. The fact that Elder

Lord was a virtual reality game with a high level of realism was once again engraved onto the user's mind. There were some users who protested to Elder Saga Corporation, but this was also ignored as part of the game.

The moment the reputation of the orcs shook the continent, they disappeared somewhere again.

“I didn't know that orcs were so tough.”

“.....”

“We have to back off,” One man said, his group sitting around a table. “Ending up like this because of an NPC...”

He was the Thawing Balhae clan master, and also the one who killed Lenox in conjunction with the Earl NPC.

Sitting beside him were the executives who survived the disbanding of the Thawing Balhae Clan. Most of them had been trounced by the orc Crockta and were forced to either quit or start a new game.

“Hyunchul, I'm sorry.”

“No, it is nothing.”

“I didn't get to raise you properly.”

Hyunchul was the user who allowed the raid to succeed after gaining the orcs' trust as Grom. As they were friends in reality, the clan master often called him by name.

“No, you are Luin here.”

“Yes.”

He reset his character, and his name was now Luin.

The clan master said, “Now we have to prepare for the big one so just wait. Do you guys remember everything?”

“Yes.”

“Yes, Brother.”

“Everybody knows,” They all answered. The clan master received overwhelming support from them.

“Do you know the Heaven and Earth Clan?”

“Heaven and Earth...that...”

“Isn't that the place of Rommel, Choi Hansung?”

The Heaven and Earth Clan and 'Rommel'. He was one of the most famous users in Elder Lord.

Rommel had found a rare job, known as a hidden piece, and was promoted to the War Maestro class. He was a user who showed tremendous skill in group battles through his excellent commanding abilities.

He was recognized for his leadership abilities and his connection to nobles, sweeping up a huge amount of achievement points and gold.

"Whose strategy was it to use the NPCs? Wasn't this started by Keynes?"

"That's right, Brother."

"Choi Hansung is connected to the nobles."

"Ohh..."

"I have a good relationship with him. Sooner or later, we will start again. At that time, we will be with Choi Hansung."

Everyone nodded. Heaven and Earth was a huge clan. Rommel received numerous users after demonstrating his commanding abilities, and there were numerous wars with other clans. Rommel also assisted NPC nobles in conflicts with other nobles, and his group was now a first rate mercenary group in Elder Lord.

“Sooner or later, that orc bastard...”

As he listened to Clan Master Keynes’ words, the man who had become Luin recalled an orc. He couldn’t see properly on the battlefield, but he had seen the orc’s appearance through a video uploaded by Laney. This orc was dreadful, scary, and covered in tattoos.

There was a vaguely familiar feel to him. He shook his head at the thought.

They were both wearing a black bandana and using a greatsword, but they had nothing else in common. He was big, there were tattoos covering his face and body, and his name was Crockta. More than anything else, he was too powerful. It was unimaginable that he was the orc who started with Hyunchul.

It couldn’t be. Luin couldn’t forget the look in Ian’s eyes. It was just a game. Luin smiled. Now he had reset and was raising a new character. He felt sorry for Ian, but this was the real world.

Keynes said, “Hyunchul, let’s go hunting. I’ll boost you up.”

“Yes Brother!”

“The rest of you should act moderately. We will reassemble soon.”

The other executives bowed their heads.

“Yes!”

Everybody’s answer rang out inside the room. Clan Master Keynes stood up and made a gesture to Luin.

“Believe in me.”

“Yes, Brother.”

“Fighting!”

“Yes, Bul...”

Luin hesitated. He had almost shouted the orc’s cry, ‘Bul’tar’. He smiled bitterly and shouted, “Yes, Brother. Fighting!”

Within the darkness of Elder Lord, the remnants of Thawing Balhae dreamed of once again bouncing back to their former status.

Crockta searched the pub signs and checked the paper in his hand again.

[If there is an inverted triangle on the signboard of a city pub, it means the Information Guild exists in the city.]

Maillard was a big city, but he couldn't find a single reverse triangle engraved on a sign anywhere. Crockta frowned. He would have to go to another city.

As he was distressed, he arrived at the Blacksmith branch in Maillard. He owed Stella for yesterday.

"I am alive," Crockta said as he entered.

"Huh?"

At the end of the counter, a male customer was leaning towards Stella and protesting, "Hey! I definitely asked for a special scar healing potion, but what is this?"

He pointed to his face. His face couldn't be seen from Crockta's position. Stella linked her hands together and said, "Customer."

"What? Do you have something to say?"

Crockta observed her response.

"You believed in us and purchased a premium scar healing

potion, so I can understand why you are upset.”

“You understand!”

“I would be really angry if I were you. You believed in the Blacksmith Company, and paid a large amount of money, only for the effectiveness to not match your expectations... it is both disappointing and a cheat. If I were you, I might’ve destroyed this place.”

“Hmph!”

“I’m really sorry.” Stella bowed her head. “To be honest, the Exclusive Scar Healing Potion doesn’t have the power to eliminate all old scars. That power is exclusive to the realm of the gods. I’m not hiding anything from you.”

“What did you say? Give me a refund!”

“You are disappointed...I can understand; however, I can’t give you a refund since the potion is already used. I have to follow the guidelines from higher up... I really apologize. However, if you give us a chance, how about a 50% discount to the scar healing clinic that we are partnered with?”

“C-Clinic...what?”

“Unlike potions, you can check your scars and manage them carefully. I can’t promise a cure, but they will gradually get better.

How about it?”

“How much?”

“The price...”

Crockta nodded. There were a number of fixed tactics in the world. The rules were the norm because they had proved effective over long periods of times. These tactics were then improved through practice and theory.

Stella’s response was a merchant’s tactic. She wasn’t fooled by any anomalies in the past and followed her own inclinations.

“Brilliant.”

Crockta nodded as he watched the client pay Stella for the temple clinic. After the calculations were over, the customer left and discovered Crockta at the door.

“.....!”

The customer stiffed the moment he saw the forbidding face of the orc. Crockta declared, “Look.”

“.....?”

“Are you really going to get rid of that scar?”

There was a sword scar that peeked out from under his eyes, all the way towards his sideburns. The man looked at Crockta. “What are you talking about?”

“Based on the calluses on your hands, you are a swordsman. Right?”

“Yes.”

“A scar on the back is shameful!” Crockta paraphrased a line from a cartoon that was popular a long time ago. “But a scar in the front is a sign of honor.”

“.....!”

“Moreover, the scar is under your eyes. You would’ve glared sharply and pierced the enemy’s throat, even as the enemy’s blade is slipping underneath your eyes. Your scars are a proof of this event.”

The man stared blankly at the orc. The orc laughed, “Thanks to that scar, you look like a better man.”

“.....!”

The man looked like he had gained enlightenment.

He reached out a hand and touched his scar. It was an old sword wound. Every time he saw it, the memory of that dangerous battle appeared in his mind, the dangerous moment where he could've died. He had been ashamed because he had been hurt by the enemy.

But that wasn't it. A warrior's wound would never be disgraceful.

The man nodded. He went back and quietly refunded the ticket to the scar healing temple clinic.

Stella stared intensely. Crockta also looked at him. The man came back to Crockta and said, "Thank you. I've learned a lot because of you."

"There is a saying about the universal brotherhood. We are brothers who walk along the same sword edge."

"That's right Brother."

The man and Crockta shook hands firmly.

"My name is Palawan. You are?"

"Crockta."

"I've heard of it. They say you are a true warrior."

Palawan nodded with a smile. “In the future, if we meet again on the battlefield...I will spare you once.”

“.....!”

A remark filled with pride! Crockta also replied with a warrior's smile, “Kulkulkul. Okay. I'll spare you twice.”

“Then I will do it three times.”

“Four times!”

“Five...”

“.....”

The two laughed and let go of their hands.

“I just hope that I don't meet you as an enemy.”

“I hope the same.”

“It was great to meet you, Crockta. I'll see you again someday.”

“Bul'tar. See you alive again.”

The man left. Stella had already headed to the entrance to glare at Crockta. She spoke the moment that the man left the store, “You’re ruining my business!”

“...Hrmm. I’m sorry.”

“This is what I get in return for my work? Bah.”

“Well, I can buy potions?”

“It’s okay.” Stella folded her arms. “What happened?”

“I came here to thank you for your help yesterday.”

“That reminds me, did the rehabilitation go well?”

“I’m not sure. I just did what I could.” Crockta smiled. Stella saw the wicked smile and didn’t ask for any more details. Maybe they were stuck somewhere in the sewers of Maillard.

“Is there anything I can do for you?”

“Then...”

Stella’s head whirled as she started thinking. “Start a performance account with me.”

“Account?”

“The Blacksmith Company has recently entered the banking business using a deposit and withdrawal system. There are many branches nationwide to support this. In addition, it also supports an exchange of letters.”

It was for her benefit. This was a way to stay connected to an NPC that she might not meet again in the world of Elder Lord! He would manage his money with the Blacksmith Company, and at the same time, she could contact him through correspondence.

Ian the novice orc, who was on her friends list, had already disappeared from her memory. This orc was Stella’s new connection.

“Hrmm. I understand. I didn’t know there was such a thing.”

“It is a newly introduced service. Here is the paperwork.”

He filled out the papers she gave him. Crockta deposited some of the money he had on hand. 20 gold. It was a big amount of money. It was some of the profit he earned from hunting the Thawing Balhae Clan.

“This is your number. Letters can be shared via magic crystal, so you can check at any time if someone leaves it in your correspondence box. Check it often.”

“I understand. It is amazing.”

“This is magic.” Stella quickly grabbed Crockta’s papers. “You know that you still have some debt left?”

“It wasn’t resolved with this account?”

“That is the debt for my help yesterday. There is still the debt for the customer today.”

“Kulkul, I see.”

Crockta nodded and told Stella, “I was wondering about one thing.”

“Yes.”

“Do you know any pub with an inverted triangle on the sign?”

“Triangle? I’m not sure.”

At that moment, a new employee appeared since it was time to change shifts. He started at the sight of the orc, but soon calmed down after realizing Crockta was friends with Stella. The employee spoke politely since Stella had been promoted to manager of a store, which was a long way from an intern.

Stella whispered, “That guy’s an intern.”

“.....”

It was an unchanging law. If someone escaped from suffering, a new person would share that pain. Life was a harsh zero sum game.

“Okay. Let’s walk around and try to find it. What do you think?”

He went around the pubs with Stella. However, there was no pub with an inverted triangle. Crockta looked at the note given to him by Derek again.

[If there is an inverted triangle on the signboard of a city pub, it means the Information Guild exists in the city.]

Go into the pub and order cream spaghetti. Ask for chopsticks instead of a fork to eat it with.

After that...]

“Triangle...”

Stella suddenly pointed to a pub on the corner of the road.

“Isn’t it over there?”

There was no inverted triangle. The Pub’s sign displayed the name, ‘Where are my Brothers?’, with an old piece of cloth hanging from the sign, shaking in the wind. It was a typical bar in the darkness of the city! It was a place that wouldn’t suit an honorable orc like Crockta.

“Where is the triangle...?”

“There.”

“Umm?”

Looking closely, the cloth wasn’t just a cloth. It was a red panty.

“.....!”

Red and lacy see-through underwear. In other words, an inverted triangle. If this was really the marking of the Information Guild, then their reliability had just decreased.

“Surely that...” Well, he would know if he ordered cream spaghetti. “Thank you. I found it thanks to you.”

“.....”

Stella started to edge away from Crockta.

“You asked for my help...to come to this place?” It was natural to think like this. The name of the pub and the underwear. Stella stepped back. “Uh, I’ve helped you, so I am going.”

“Ah, no! I think there is a misunderstanding...”

“Have a great time!”

“.....”

Stella turned and ran away.

“...Bul’tar.”

Somehow, it was embarrassing. He wasn’t that type of man. Crockta comforted his wounded heart and turned his body. Anyway, he had found the Information Guild. It was enough if he could obtain the information he desired.

Did they know about the remnants of the Thawing Balhae Clan?

Crockta opened the door of the pub called ‘Where are my Brothers?’

Chapter 57 – To The North (2)

The door opened.

The faces inside the gloomy pub turned towards Crockta. They discovered the appearance of an orc before turning back to their conversations. It was an old pub that had scenery similar to Van Gogh's 'The Potato Eaters.'

Crockta sat at a table. The owner of the place, who was standing at the bar, threw a glance to Crockta, as if he was asking what he wanted. Crockta declared, "Cream spaghetti."

He spoke quietly, but the inside of the pub was narrow, causing his low voice to echo inside. The pub customers turned to Crockta after hearing cream spaghetti. His eyes turned dreary. The guests were laughing at him.

"An orc ordering cream spaghetti... This isn't a comedy."

"Isn't that a dish for girls? Kukukuk..."

"Will he also order strawberry juice and a kiwi parfait? Kelkel..."

Crockta's eyebrows twitched.

The pub owner also laughed, like he thought it was absurd, before going into the kitchen. He placed butter in the frying pan,

poured in chicken broth, and stirred it quickly, so that there were no solid clumps. At the same time, he prepared 160 grams of spaghetti and boiled it in three times the amount of water, while also cooking bacon in another pan.

It was a classic recipe.

Crockta admired the master's meticulousness while also squinting at the table of the customers who were laughing at him.

They were eating pork dishes and drinking strong alcohol. They placed thick pieces in their mouths and sucked on their greasy fingers. Their eyes were filled with arrogance as they looked at Crockta while chewing on the meat. Then they gulped down the alcohol.

“.....”

He had to admit it. They were rugged men, real males. He was eating cream spaghetti in the holy place of these men. Crockta found himself becoming smaller on the inside. The one who was blind to romance and dating had ordered a cream spaghetti!

The food he ordered came out, and Crockta discovered the fork and spoon wrapped in a napkin. He stopped the owner and said, “Wait.”

“.....?”

The owner looked at him with a scornful look, as if his customer was being troublesome. Crockta said, “Chopsticks.”

“...Hoh.” His eyes changed.

“Chopsticks.”

The atmosphere in the pub was released at Crockta’s declaration, becoming one where the other people recognized him as a man.

“I thought he would put the fork and spoon in the bowl to twirl the spaghetti.”

“Maybe it just suits his taste?”

“I also want to eat greasy food sometimes. Kukuk.”

They nodded as they placed boiled eggs in their mouths and chewed. Crockta also slurped up the spaghetti using the chopsticks. He chewed and ordered whiskey. He downed the glass of whiskey handed to him by the owner.

“Kuoh.”

Crockta was now a brother of the pub after drinking the alcohol.

“Ah, right.”

He had been swept up in the atmosphere. He had a separate mission. Crockta looked at the note again.

[Go into the pub and order cream spaghetti. Then, ask for chopsticks instead of a fork to eat it with.

After that, take a line of spaghetti and use it to draw an inverted triangle on the table.

Then they will give you access.]

“.....!”

It was a big deal. Crockta had already eaten all his cream spaghetti. He forcefully raised the hand that wouldn't go up. The owner looked over at Crockta and approached, placing a hand on Crockta's shoulder.

“Hey, Macho Orc. Do you want something to drink now?”

Crockta spoke in a hesitant tone, “Cr...”

“Cr?”

“Cream spaghetti...one more...”

The owner's gaze became cold.

“.....”

Crockta looked down. The owner returned to the kitchen without speaking. When he looked around, the other customers were also shaking their heads at Crockta.

Crockta was ashamed. He vowed that as soon as he obtained information from the guild, he would eat a whole pig here. In the end, Crockta ate the cream spaghetti again with the chopsticks and drew an inverted triangle on the table.

“.....”

The owner's eyes changed when he saw the symbol. The owner walked towards Crockta and banged on the table.

“Hey, Orc.”

“.....”

Crockta turned to him. The owner beckoned, “Come here.”

Then he opened a door in a corner of the pub and entered. Crockta looked after him with a grim expression and followed as the pub customers heckled after the orc.

“What did you do Orc? Are you going to be hit?”

“Don’t cry as you’re being beaten. Kelkel.”

“If you endure it, then I’ll buy you some cream spaghetti, and some strawberry juice as well. Kikik!”

They dug back into their pork with the reassurance that they were eating manly foods.

The interior of the room was larger than Crockta thought. The pub owner pulled something on the floor and revealed a staircase leading to the basement. It looked quite deep. He glanced at Crockta and descended.

Deep underground, there was a dark, dimly lit room that looked like it was meant for investigation purposes. Inside was a table with two chairs facing each other. They each sat down and Crockta asked, “The panty is the mark of the guild?”

“It is our belief.”

“Panties?”

“It is the intelligence guild’s belief that they can even discover the color of a person’s panties.”

“.....”

“There are some branches that are ashamed and use the inverted triangle, but I respect tradition.”

It was odd but it made sense. Crockta nodded. “In any case, I came to buy information.”

“What information do you want, Crockta?”

“.....!”

Crockta raised his gaze. This man already knew Crockta’s name. The man laughed and continued, “Do you want to chase after the rest of the Thawing Balhae Clan?”

“.....!” Crockta quickly agreed. “Yes, truly great. I can believe that you are an information guild.”

“The information about the Thawing Balhae Clan costs either 20 gold or 30 gold.”

“What’s the difference?”

“I will let you know if you have the money.”

Crockta nodded with folded arms. “It’s quite expensive.”

“The payment needs to be upfront.”

“...Here.”

Crockta pulled out some money. He hadn't known that he was going to pay 30 gold, so there wasn't much money left. “Now, let me know the difference.”

“20 gold is for the current information, while 30 gold will give you more information in the future.”

“You mean?”

“The exact location of those guys is still unknown, but we will keep an eye on them and continue to accumulate information. I will provide you with any information I gain in the future.”

Crockta shook his head. “How can I trust you? What if you fail?”

“Failure...”

The man from the information guild got up from his seat before turning to the wall behind him. He placed his hand inside the hole on the wall. The sound of someone moving around could be heard from within. When he finally pulled out his hand, he was holding a piece of paper in it.

The information guild must be beyond this room. The man handed the piece of paper to Crockta.

“Luin.”

“Luin?”

“That is the new name of Grom, the one who you are tracking.”

Crockta’s face stiffened. He checked the paper that the man gave him. On it was the name ‘Luin’, a rough description of his appearance, and some other information on it.

“Do you know that those cursed by the stars can change their appearance?”

“.....”

“It’s hard to believe, but it’s true. They lose all of their abilities and appear with a new look. The orc Grom, the one who betrayed you and Lenox, has now become a human. We can hardly believe it either. The curse of the stars is a really unknown phenomenon.”

Crockta listened to his words. The man seemed to have a subtle understanding of the users. NPCs were gradually grasping onto the characteristics of users. Crockta once again felt like Elder Lord was mysterious.

Were they really just AIs in a game? Were the three-dimensional characters he met just fakes designed for the game to be enjoyed?

‘Go to the Temple of the Fallen God.’

Gordon’s voice was heard again. Crockta had a strong feeling that he should go to the Temple of the Fallen God.

Crockta said, “Yes, I will believe you. Then I will buy one more piece of information.”

“What is it?”

“Do you know about the Temple of the Fallen God?”

He looked at Crockta, not expecting this question.

“Temple of the Fallen God... I don’t have any information about it. The north is far beyond our influence.” The north, a harsh land where ogres roamed freely and wyverns flew across the skies. “I know the approximate location since it isn’t hard to find. I can get it from anywhere. I’ll give it to you for free.”

“Thank you.”

“Do you mean to go to the north?”

Crockta nodded. The man looked at Crockta. Tattoos everywhere and a burly body. An excellent greatsword. It was the appearance of a powerful man worthy of the rumors. He was qualified to head north.

“When you came back from the north, I will have information about the Thawing Balhae Clan ready.” The man grinned.

“I understand. The current information has been sent to the mailbox of the Blacksmith Company.”

The information guild already knew that Crockta had an account. Crockta had only made it today because of Stella, yet they already knew. It meant an information source existed inside the Blacksmith Company. Maybe it was Stella’s intern.

Crockta nodded and got up. The man spoke, “If you are going to the north then you might want to find out more information from Quantas.”

Quantas was a city located on the fringes of the north. Crockta entered the name Quantas in his head.

Crockta climbed the stairs with the owner and entered the pub, where the previous pub customers were still present. They looked between Crockta and the pub owner with excitement in their eyes.

“What, no blows were exchanged?”

“He looks fine.”

The customers said with disappointment.

Crockta spoke to the information guild employee and owner of the pub, “Hey.”

“.....?”

He glanced at Crockta for a moment . It was a signal to not say anything about the information guild. But Crockta wasn't trying to talk about that.

“A roasted pig, is it possible to get that here?”

“.....!”

The pub customers were stunned by Crockta's words.

“I would like to eat a whole roasted pig.”

The pub owner looked at Crockta with surprise before laughing.
“Can you afford it?”

“Of course.”

Crockta looked at the customers who laughed at him and said,

“It’s different from eating a sandwich that only contains a few pieces of pork.”

“.....!”

Their faces distorted but they couldn’t make any excuses.

The pub owner went into the kitchen to prepare a roasted pig. In a corner of the kitchen, there was a complete pig barbecue system with ventilation. He placed a pig on a skewer and started cooking it. The great smell of pork filled the inside of the pub.

“Hum hum. We will be going.”

“Yes.”

“Eat deliciously, orc brother.”

The customers drank the remaining alcohol and tried to escape the pub like they were running away. Crockta called after them.

“Hey, you guys.”

“Yes...?”

They looked back at Crockta. Crockta gestured to the kitchen and asked. “Aren’t you going to eat?”

“.....!”

They came to a stop. That’s right. The orc was a man.

They laughed and teased him about strawberry juice, but a real man wouldn’t care. He forgot all about earlier and invited them without any hesitation. It wouldn’t be manly if they refused the invitation.

“This is...we have lost.”

“Orc, you are a real man.”

“I met a decent male. Kikikik.”

They turned around again. Together with Crockta, they ate pork and drank wine. The pub owner joined them at a later time.

The communion between men!

It was the last dinner that Crockta enjoyed before heading to the north to find the Temple of the Fallen God.

Chapter 58 – Quantes (1)

Crockta stood before a gate.

This was Quantes, the city of the gnomes. Perhaps that was why both the city and entrance seemed small. The gate was firmly closed. Crockta knocked on the gate and waited for the gatekeeper to show up.

However, no one showed up. The door remained firmly closed. Crockta folded his arms. It seemed like there was a ban on foreigners today. The moment that Crockta was thinking about yelling...

The ground started to shake.

“.....?”

Something huge was running this way. Crockta turned around, his eyes widening in shock. From far away, huge monsters were leaping off the ground.

Ogres!

They were several times larger and much more burly than orcs. Their intelligence was low, but they acted on their instincts, and were one of the worst monsters that attacked others randomly, chewing them alive.

The ogres looked at Crockta and drooled, saw-like teeth flashing in their mouths. The flesh and blood of various unknown animals were stuck to them.

Crockta tried to flee, but they had already found him and rushed towards him.

“Kuweeeh!”

The ogre wielded a huge wooden stick that Crockta quickly dodged. The wind whistled in Crockta’s ears as the stick forcefully sliced through the air.

A chill went down his spine. This was the ogre’s power. He heard the stories, but this was the first time he heard it directly.

“Damn, Bul’tar...!”

However, he was an orc, a fierce warrior. In addition, his weapon was Ogre Slayer, a greatsword crafted by the Golden Anvil Clan! Maybe he had finally met the right enemies. Crockta carefully moved his greatsword.

However, there wasn’t just one ogre, but many more. Five other ogres soon began to approach Crockta. It was an emergency if even one ogre appeared at a city. Crockta fell back against the city wall.

“This...!”

He had forgotten about his rear. As Crockta's eyes widened, the ogres seemed to be smiling at him. Crockta scrambled to raise his greatsword and prepared for the worst. He vowed to kill at least one.

Bam bam bbam bba bam bam bamm-!

Suddenly, trumpets sounded from above Crockta's head and a loud voice could heard from behind him.

"Quantes' Gnome Garrison! Asura Thousand Wave Artillery, load!"

"Asura Thousand Wave Artillery, complete!"

Crockta looked up at the sound. At the edge of the wall, cannons were sticking out. The childish voices continued to shout, "Turn off the safety device!"

"Off!"

"Aim towards the target!"

"Aimed!"

"These guys! Let them know the cost of attacking out city! Launchhh!"

“Launchhh!”

Lights flashed above Crockta’s head and there was the sound of something exploding as the lights flew towards the ogres. Red, blue, and other variously colored lights hit the ogres’ bodies.

“Woooo...!”

“Kueeong...!”

The ogres struck by the energy guns stayed still for a moment before falling over. The gnomes didn’t stop their attacks as a baptism of magic power followed. The ogres crouched and covered their heads.

The gnomes’ attacks struck the ogres without rest. It wasn’t a physical attack, but a magical bombardment of magic bullets made by using the extensive magic engineering skills of the gnomes. Then, the attacks stopped.

He could hear a fuss occurring on the walls.

“Uwahh, charge faster, charge faster!”

“There isn’t enough magic power dot!”

“They’re getting up!”

“Why are the supplies coming so late?”

“Stay calm!”

The ogres crouching on the ground noticed the pause in bombardment and got up and started to roar.

“Kuweeeh!”

“Kuwaaaaaaaah!”

The ground rumbled as the ogres rushed towards the wall with angry expressions. Crockta hurriedly moved out of the way.

Kwaang!

They swung their weapons at the gate, cracking it. One ogre even started climbing up the wall.

“What should we do, Captain Tiyo?”

“C-C-Calmly!”

The angry ogres moved away from Crockta and rushed towards the walls and the gate, aiming for the gnomes. Crockta, who had been quietly watching from a distance, approached them from

behind with Ogre Slayer in his hand. The ogre's thick skin couldn't be deeply wounded by an ordinary sword. At best, it would just raise the ogre's anger.

However, Crockta's sword, Ogre Slayer, was different. It was a named sword. Crockta leaped towards the ogre climbing the wall and wielded his sword. The blade tore at the ogre's skin.

“Eeeeeng!”

The ogre fell from the wall.

“.....!”

The gnomes hunting the ogres discovered Crockta's presence.

“What?”

The gnomes saw an orc swinging a greatsword at the ogres outside the wall.

“An orc?”

Orcs weren't often seen in Quantas. Furthermore, it was the first time they had ever seen an orc fight against an ogre alone. The ogre backed away every time the orc's sword flashed. Dazzling swordsmanship!

Captain Tiyo shouted at the garrison soldiers who were staring blankly, “Everybody move quickly! It’s impossible for an orc alone!”

“Yep!”

“This will give us enough time dot!”

The gnomes on the wall hurriedly charged their magic power. Captain Tiyo looked down with sober eyes. Out of the five ogres, the orc was completely marking one. The rest of them were attacking the gate, or climbing up the other walls.

“Um...!”

It was dangerous. In particular, the gate was on the verge of crumbling. At that moment...

“Bul’tarr—!”

The orc escaped from the ogre he was attacking and ran towards the one striking the gate. He swung the greatsword at one of the ogre’s legs.

“Keooooook!”

The ogre staggered and turned a pair of furious eyes towards the orc.

The orc shouted, “Come! Don’t run or hide!”

“Uwooooooh!”

“Kuoooooh!”

Two ogres rushed towards the orc. The orc started running away after receiving their attention. His movements were swift but there was a limit. The ogre’s stick hit the orc’s greatsword.

“Ugh!”

The orc blocked it with his greatsword, but his body flew through the air from the impact. He soon landed and rolled on the ground. The ogre’s stick aimed towards the orc again, who rolled to avoid it.

Tiyo started sweating as he watched the battle. The orc continued to attack the ogres with dangerous movements. Without the orc, the ogres would’ve climbed up the walls and killed the gnomes by now.

A great warrior.

Captain Tiyo shouted, “Ready!”

“Yep! It is ready!”

“The preparations are complete!”

The Quantes gnomes soldiers replied. Tiyo also inserted magic power into the rifle on his shoulders. His weapon, the magic rifle ‘General’, was an ancient legacy that was classified as an artifact. Tiyo aimed for an ogre’s head.

“Save the orc! Power aim!”

“Aim!”

“Launchhh!”

Before long, the colorful magic power of the gnomes sparked again. The red and blue magic bullets hit the ogres, who lost their balance and fell to the ground.

“Uwooooooh!”

Crockta looked up. A small gnome holding a rifle was staring at him from the wall. He pointed at the ogre and lifted his thumb and then turned it upside down. It was an obvious signal.

Crockta nodded and firmly grasped his greatsword, Ogre Slayer. The ogres were still curled up as magic bullets continued to fall onto their bodies. It was time to end them once and for all.

There was no need to give them a good send-off to the afterlife. At a glance, life and death seemed to be quite distant. It was the fate of a swordsman to connect the two ends that seemed to be far away from each other!

The Ogre Slayer broke the neck of the defenseless ogres. Two ogres died in quick succession. The rest of the group was still attached to the walls. Their expressions changed as they saw that the situation was suddenly changing. The ogres' disgusting faces seemed more demon like.

They revealed their saw blade like teeth and roared, "Kuweeeh!"

"Kuaaaaah!"

They launched themselves off the wall and rushed towards Crockta.

They were fools.

"...Bul'tar!"

Crockta raised his greatsword.

Running away from the walls just made them better targets for the gnomes' magic power. The magic power of the gnomes poured towards the backs of the ogres, who were hit by the magic power. They rolled to the ground upon impact.

The destructive power wasn't enough to kill them, but the gnomes' Asura Thousand Wave Artillery caused each ogre tremendous suffering. Then Crockta's greatsword, the Ogre Slayer, killed them!

Even the fearful ogres of Elder Lord couldn't beat this combination. Crockta sliced them one by one. The ogres suffered from bloodshot eyes and breathed their last breath.

Crockta turned his head. The gnomes holding rifles and dressed in soldier uniforms were staring at Crockta.

Bam bam bbam bba bam bam bamm-!

The sound of the trumpet rang out again, like a signal marking the start of the battle. At that moment, a gnome with a long rifle saluted towards Crockta. It was the best honor for friends who fought together.

Following him, the other Quantas soldiers also saluted Crockta. Crockta felt an unknown feeling inside as he was saluted by the small gnomes on the wall.

He was a soldier who often crossed the line, but he didn't receive salutations often. People were too afraid of him to pay tribute to him. He wasn't a soldier guarding the border, but one who broke through the border in order to kill people.

This was a strange feeling. Crockta faced them and saluted.

Bam bam bbam bba bam bam bamm-!

The trumpet of victory sounded again. The eye contact between warriors!

It was the first meeting of Captain Tiyo of the Quantes Gnomes Garrison and the orc warrior Crockta.

“What did you come here for?” Captain Tiyo asked in a loud voice.

He had a childlike quality to his voice, but the force behind it was like a general’s voice during a wartime rally. They were sitting in front of the entrance management office, located across from Quanta’ gate.

Crockta replied, “I came to get help before heading north.”

Captain Tiyo frowned. The north was the dangerous area where the group of ogres that almost defeated them today came from, and the place where many other scary things dwelled.

“Well, it doesn’t really matter. You have your circumstances. But Quantes isn’t accepting outsiders for a while dot!”

“Why not?”

Crockta knew that Quantas was a city of gnomes, but it wasn't a place with limited access like Arnin.

“These days, many creatures are pouring from the north dot. Not just the ogres, but doppelgangers and the evil lich dot. They have blocked access to outsiders due to the doppelganger dot.”

“Umm...”

“The doppelganger is still somewhere here dot!”

Crockta understood the situation. However, this made it difficult for him. Tiyo said, “But I can believe in you dot. You are a fellow who defeated the ogres along with us! I will guarantee your identity and send you in.”

“Yes!”

Crockta nodded. He reached out.

“Thank you.”

“Bah! Don't say it like that dot!”

Tiyo waved his hands as if he was embarrassed. The gnome's words and behavior were completely different from each other.

Gnomes were the size of a child. If the dwarves gave off a small and reliable impression, the gnomes were cute like small humans. However, they excelled in magician engineering, and were the best in the field of magic, enchanting, and engineering.

Despite being a great alternative to the elves, they were the next least popular species after the orcs.

“Good dot. What is your name? Where are you from?” Tiyo asked since he was acting as the entrance attendant.

“My name is Crockta. I became a warrior at Orcrox Fortress, and am currently heading to the north.”

Tiyo's eyes widened. “Crockta? Honorable Orc Crockta?”

Crockta's shoulders went up. “Hum hum, some people call me that. Kulkulkul.”

“Ohh! Glorious!”

Tiyo stood up excitedly before sitting down again. His response made it seem like he was trying not to lose his dignity.

“Hu, hum hum! In any case! You use a big sword, and have

tattoos all over your body, so you fit the description of Crockta. The bravery you showed today also fits with Crockta dot. Welcome to Quantes dot.”

Thus, Crockta was allowed access to Quantes.

“But you should be careful. Right now, the public sentiment in Quantes isn’t good dot. Recently, a doppelganger has committed a series of murders. In particular, you are a scary orc so...”

“It’s okay.”

“Did you say you came to Quantes before going to the north?”

Crockta nodded.

“The North... There are students studying the north, so it would be good if you visited the academy dot,” Tiyo said. His tone was grim and sober, but he had a child’s voice, so Crockta couldn’t help smiling. Tiyo noticed and frowned.

“An oversized orc shouldn’t ignore gnomes dot. Gnomes are very clever, wise, and powerful dot.”

“I know. Your magic power is really great.”

“Hmm hmm! It is natural. We are proud of our gnomes dot. Kikik.” Tiyo was in a good mood and laughed loudly. “Crockta, I

will authorize your access.

“Thank you Tiyo.”

He left the administration office with Tiyo. The city of the gnomes was small and charming, but everything was organized. Unlike other cities, the streets were blocked and arranged regularly in a modern configuration.

“Hum hum. Crockta?”

“.....?”

“When I saw your salute before, your posture was quite excellent dot. Do you have any military experience?”

Crockta laughed. “I once served.”

“Hoh, I see. You were a soldier.” Tiyo’s eyes lit up. “I have agreed to drink with the squad members who defeated the ogres. Crockta contributed as well, so you should go with me!”

Alcohol. No man could refuse.

Thus, Crockta wandered the streets with the gnome captain Tiyo.

Chapter 59 – Quantes (2)

Crockta drank with Tiyo and the rest of the garrison before returning to his accommodation. It was a clean inn. The city of gnomes was a good place to stay because it was clean throughout.

The innkeeper was wary towards Crockta, but eventually accepted his money and reluctantly gave him a room.

“Your room is Number 304. Here is the key.”

“Thank you.”

Crockta went up to his room and opened the door. The first thing that stood out to him was the white sheet.

“Hoh.”

Everything was arranged without error like in a hotel instead of an inn. Everything was clean. It was enough to make him forget the innkeeper’s unkind attitude.

Crockta sat down on the bed. He could see the bathtub from there through the half-open door of the bathroom. This meant the drainage facilities were good. Crockta marveled at the level of civilization that the gnomes had achieved. It seemed like they weren’t just experts in magic engineering.

The accommodation was a little expensive, but it was reasonable if the facilities were this clean.

Crockta laid down on the bed and thought of what to do next.

First, look for information about the North. He also needed to prepare for the trip. If possible, find some colleagues. The north was a harsh land so it was better to go with other people instead of alone.

“Temple of the Fallen God...”

He wondered if he could find answers there.

Crockta reached out for the ceiling.

The rough hands of an orc were visible. He slowly formed a fist. As he used his strength, his blood vessels could be seen through the green skin. The muscles protruded and the blood pumped stirred along with his heartbeat. His whole body felt full of vitality.

Was this truly a fantasy world? Crockta was overwhelmed by an unknown feeling after he met the man called Gordon. It seemed like he could find the answer if he went to the Temple of the Fallen God.

“Hoo.”

Crockta got up from the bed. It was nighttime, but Users didn't need to sleep. He headed to the bathroom to wash up. However, there were no towels in the bathroom. Crockta went down to the counter on the ground floor to receive a towel and returned to his room.

An elf was using a key on the door next to Crockta. Their eyes met. The elf stared at Crockta.

Crockta greeted her, "...Hey, are you alive?"

"....."

The elf didn't respond and just walked through the door. Crockta shrugged. He had endured many cold winds blowing from women before.

Crockta opened the door and entered the bathroom. He decided to take a soak in the bathtub. The burning hot water sloshed against the thick skin of the burly orc. Crockta buried his body deep into the narrow bathtub and closed his eyes.

It was relaxing. He was an orc, so would he dream an orc's dream? The distant scenery of Orcrox Fortress appeared as he lightly napped.

He saw Lenox, as well as Grant and Hoyt. He seemed to have a dream about fighting the enemy with a lot of orcs.

Crockta opened his eyes. His keen hearing had captured a small noise from across the bathroom wall and in the next room. He recalled the appearance of the female elf who he met before.

Smack lips. Slurp.

There was a noise. An unpleasant noise. He heard the sound of something chewing. Crockta left the bathtub and held his ear close to the bathroom wall.

Drip.

At that moment, a drop of water on the ceiling fell back towards the tub.

“Ohuum...um...”

He heard a groaning sound.

It was the sound of a pained scream that was being blocked by something, a familiar sound to Crockta. When he had struck at the Thawing Balhae Clan members, they would make this sound through the gag.

Crockta's eyes cooled.

He left the bathroom and roughly put on clothes before grabbing his greatsword. He killed the sound of his footsteps and

approached the next room where the elf was. As he came closer, his ears could hear the subtle sound again.

“Hup...um...!”

The groaning became more vivid. Crockta immediately kicked at the door, breaking both the door and its latch wide open.

“.....!”

Crockta was speechless at the sight before him. An elf was lying on the floor with both of her arms bound. Another elf had their face buried in her thigh and was chewing on it. Blood flowed from the flesh.

“...Grr?”

The elf who was eating the thigh turned their gaze towards Crockta. The white part of their eyes was black, and their teeth were also extremely sharpened as if they weren't an elf's. More than anything else, her appearance was the same as the elf who was bound.

Doppelganger!

The doppelganger discovered Crockta and flashed a wicked grin and a mocking expression. Crockta's face distorted.

“Bul’tar!”

Crockta rushed forward and wielded the Ogre Slayer. The doppelganger retreated with bizarre movements that weren’t like a human.

“Ufff...!”

The doppelganger did such rough movements using the elf’s face. Crockta quickly squinted at the injured elf and pulled her towards him.

“Are you okay?”

“.....”

The elf didn’t reply, like she had fainted. Crockta placed the elf behind him and raised his greatsword. The doppelganger stared at him with mocking eyes. The moment that Crockta approached, the doppelganger turned around.

“.....!”

It was like it was listening to something. Crockta didn’t miss that small gap and jumped. He swung his greatsword, but the doppelganger avoided Crockta’s attack with a strange elasticity that wasn’t elf-like.

It hangs to the ceiling upside down like a spider.

“.....!”

Crockta was confused but the doppelganger still had its head turned and was paying attention to something out the window.

“What are you looking at? Bring it on!” Crockta shouted.

The doppelganger spun its head. It hung upside down and its body didn't move at all, with only the neck turning in the opposite direction. Crockta got goosebumps as an elf showed such bizarre movements.

The doppelganger whispered, “Calling me...” It was a strange voice. “It is calling...”

Crockta waved his greatsword vertically towards the doppelganger on the ceiling. The doppelganger twisted its body to avoid it and fell to the floor. Then it broke the window and ran outside.

“This!”

Crockta looked out the window. The doppelganger landed on the ground. The black shadow of the doppelganger fell into the darkness of the city at a tremendous speed. Soon its appearance couldn't be seen anymore.

“.....!”

A truly bizarre monster. It was literally as Tiyo said: The doppelganger was a threat to Quantess. Ogres and doppelgangers. It definitely wasn't ordinary. What was going on in Quantess right now?

Crockta turned back to the elf, who had lost consciousness.

“Wake up.”

Crockta shook her. Then he could hear the sound of running. It seemed like people were coming due to the chaos of the fighting and the broken window. Crockta shouted.

“This way!”

The innkeeper wasn't the only one who appeared, since he had already called Quantess' garrison soldiers. Crockta beckoned.

“You came. This elf here was attacked by the doppelganger...”

“As expected from the outsider!”

The innkeeper cut off Crockta's words. Crockta shook his head.
“There seems to be a misunderstanding. I didn't...”

“What are you doing? Arrest that orc!”

The gnomes of the Quantas garrison approached. None of them were the soldiers whom he had fought and played with during the day. The gnomes in uniform pointed guns, similar to the Asura Thousand Wave Artillery, at the harsh looking orc with nervous expressions on their faces.

“We will take you to jail. Come along obediently.”

Crockta spoke again, “It is a misunderstanding. The doppelganger is...”

“.....”

They stared at him with disbelieving eyes. Crockta sighed. He didn't want to cause any trouble. He had a connection with Tiyo and the other garrison members, so he decided to follow the procedure for now.

“You will know that you made a mistake once the elf wakes up. Please treat this elf quickly,” Crockta said. He held out his hands without resisting and continued.

“There is a procedure so please follow it.” The gnome soldiers handcuffed him.

“Of course, I respect you.” Crockta grinned.

Thanks to the elf’s testimony, Crockta was soon released but the sun was already rising. He had stayed all night in a narrow solitary confinement so his body was stiff. The gnome guards respectfully apologized. Crockta politely accepted their apology.

“You were just following procedure. I understand.”

“I’m sorry.”

Crockta shook hands with the gnome defenders and stepped outside. Quantas was lively in the morning. The gnomes that came up to Crockta’s waist were busy coming and going. The gnomes were small in stature, so it was like a panoramic view.

He was looking around for a good restaurant when someone spoke to him, “Excuse me.”

“Huh?”

It was the female elf that Crockta saved last night. She approached Crockta. “You saved me, right? I have been waiting to thank you.”

Crockta thought as he watched her bow. Was the elf who opened

the door with the key and ignored his greeting the real elf or the doppelganger?

The elf smiled gently at Crockta's stare. "I'm sorry for not responding to you the first time. I am a very shy person."

It was like this. Crockta nodded. "You don't have to thank me. Anyone else would've done it."

"Nobody else did it."

She had a limp, and there was a bandage around the portion of the thigh that was eaten by the doppelganger.

Crockta asked, "Are you okay?"

"Yes. It isn't a severe injury, thanks to you. Thank you."

"How did you get hit by the doppelganger?"

"I don't know. I walked into my room when someone who looked exactly like me popped out from the corner..." She shuddered. "I thought I was going to die."

"You were lucky. Be careful from now on."

"Orc, what is your name?"

“Crockta.”

The elf’s eyes widened. She didn’t know the details, but it seemed like she had heard the name before.

“Ah, that...”

“What is your name?”

“I’m Eileen.”

After a quick conversation on the street, Eileen decided to treat Crockta to a meal. They headed to a nearby restaurant. Crockta ordered a thick steak while she ordered a salad.

“Are you going to the north?”

“I want to find the Temple of the Fallen God.”

“The Fallen God...” She didn’t know it. “It’s the first time I’ve heard of it, but the north is known as a dangerous place...”

“A warrior isn’t afraid of danger.”

“How great.”

“Why did you come to Quantas?”

“I am studying magical engineering at Quanta’s Academy.”

Crockta nodded. The gnomes’ skills in this field of research were world renowned. It wasn’t strange for people to study with them.

“In particular, I am studying artifacts that were recently excavated in Quantas.”

“Artifacts?”

“Yes. It is an ancient and mysterious legacy that can’t be created with today’s technology.”

Artifacts were more than just magic enchanted items. There were some users who obtained artifacts. However, after their existence was known, the users were killed and the artifacts were stolen. Then Eileen lowered her voice, “In particular, the thing discovered this time... it is a belt called the Demon’s Mouth.”

“Demon’s Mouth...?”

“Yes. The exact purpose of its existence hasn’t been revealed, but it is a strange thing that emits a dreadful aura. There are rumors that the researchers who first discovered it went mad when studying it.”

The Demon's Mouth. Crockta was curious about it. But Eileen didn't know the details either.

“Right now, the gnomes have sealed it, and are arguing if they should continue studying it or not... I wish I could continue my research. I came because of it.”

“I'm also curious. Let's pray,” Crockta said as he chewed on his steak. It was oversized, but the amount was still small. However, the taste was wonderful.

Eileen asked, “Are you going to visit the academy today?”

“Hmm...”

Crockta planned to follow Tiyo's advice and stop by the academy for information about the North. Crockta thought for a moment before nodding.

“I have no other plans so I will do so.”

“Then can I guide you around the academy?” Eileen said with a smile. Crockta nodded without any hesitation. Unlike her first impression, she was a moderately friendly elf.

“It is an honor. Please do so.”

“Huhu. It is nothing.”

Eileen bowed her head at Crockta’s reply.

At that moment... The system message that he hadn’t seen for a while popped up.

][You are doing very well!]

[Love Mode is currently locked. Do you want to activate Love Mode?]

Chapter 60 – The Demon’s Mouth (1)

There was a basic value in the world. Based on observation, there was usually a regular value that was commonly used. Therefore, people felt uncomfortable when another person suddenly showed a ‘special’ value outside of that.

“One Iced Americano.”

“Yes, is a large size okay?” The boss of a cafe would ask.

Why bother not asking for a regular size first? Was it because he didn’t know the meaning of regular? Or was it because it was a negotiation psychology? Or maybe the person looked like someone who couldn’t say ‘no?’

Crockta felt like that at this moment.

‘Love Mode is currently locked. Do you want to activate Love Mode?’

Was this question even necessary? Wasn’t it the same as asking, ‘Are you human?’

What a frustrating question! Crockta answered decisively.

Crockta and Eileen headed to Quantes Academy.

It was a huge facility located in the center of Quantes and was the home of magical engineering research. All different types of works were being developed here. The Asura Thousand Wave Artillery, the core of the Quantes garrison, was created here.

The first person they visited was a creature specialist. Due to Quantes being right next to the north, the gnomes often encountered many creatures, which was why creature research was actively carried out in Quantes.

The gnome creatures specialist fixed his glasses and asked, “You’re going to the north?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“I want to visit the Temple of the Fallen God.”

“The Fallen God, hrmm...”

Doctor Gnome swept back the white hair on his head. His body was small, but the wrinkles around his eyes made him seem like a twilight gnome that had lived for a long time.

“The Fallen God... It has been a long time since I’ve heard that

name.”

“Do you know it?” Crockta asked.

The Temple of the Fallen God was known to a certain extent, but no one was able to correctly answer what it was.

“I don’t know exactly what it is, I’ve only heard the name.” The Doctor Gnome buried himself deeply in his chair. “Please sit down. My neck will hurt from just looking up at you.”

This was the laboratory of Doctor Gnome, a creatures specialist. Crockta and Eileen sat down on the chairs in front of Doctor Gnome’s desk.

“For the Fallen God, the theological professors would know better than me, so you should ask them instead. I just know creatures.”

“I understand. What type of species live in the north?”

Doctor Gnome laughed. “Orcs like you.”

“Huh?”

“Orcs live beyond the forest that separates the north and the rest of the continent.”

The reason why the northern territory was an object of fear was due to the Forest of Creatures. Few people survived when they entered the forest, but not much was known beyond that fact. It was the first time he had heard that orcs lived beyond the forest.

“Orcs and dark elves. There are also many species that don’t exist on the continent.”

“.....”

“But right now, you should be more worried about what is in the forest than what is beyond it. That forest... Ogres are considered just ordinary monsters in there.”

Doctor Gnome opened a thick book on his desk.

“In particular, it has become strange recently. It is unprecedented for them to charge at Quantas like they have been these days... Those guys are too violent. Thus, it is far more dangerous right now. This is a book that I wrote, so look at the chapter on the north.”

Crockta took the book. The table of contents allowed him to roughly learn about the north. Ogres, trolls, wyverns, great worms, hydras, undead and other evil beings were listed in the index.

Crockta frowned. It was too diverse.

“That is a lot. Umm...” Crockta handed the book back, but the doctor refused.

“I don’t need it right now, so you can take it.”

“Huh?”

“This is a reward for protecting Quantas, Ogre Slayer Crockta.” Doctor Gnome laughed. The news that Crockta had repelled the ogres with the gnome garrison had already spread. “Captain Tiyo told me. A great orc warrior.”

“It is undeserved praise.”

“Once upon a time, orcs and gnomes had a good relationship. The big and strong orc, and the small, but clever, gnomes. They helped each other, but that changed over time. That’s why this is good.”

Doctor Gnome smiled.

“Be careful when you venture into the north, as the creatures there are strong. I hope that you arrive safely at the Temple of the Fallen God, and that you find what you wish. I don’t know what you’re looking for there.”

“Thank you.”

“If you want to know about the Fallen God, then please visit this

gnome.”

Doctor Gnome wrote something with a feather pen and handed the paper to Crockta. It contained the name of a theology professor, Doctor Eyona. On it was her address and a simple signature from Doctor Gnome.

“She is enjoying a sabbatical right now, so please visit her. If you say that I sent you, she will be quite happy.”

“Thank you.”

Crockta asked Doctor Gnome a few more questions about the north. The most striking story that he heard in return was about the origin of the forest. According to legend, it was originally an ordinary forest; however, an evil spirit died there, causing the evil aura to gradually grow bigger until the forest separated the north from the rest of the continent.

Crockta nodded his head. “Thank you for the help.”

“I’m really honored to have helped a famous warrior.”

Crockta shook hands with Doctor Gnome. Eileen smiled as she watched them. It was around lunchtime when they left Doctor Gnome’s laboratory. Eileen asked, “Crockta, do you want to go see the Demon’s Mouth that I told you about?”

“Can I see it?”

She nodded. “A friend of mine works there, so he can give us a tour. How about it?”

“Okay. I’m also curious.”

“This might be the last chance. I don’t know when it will be permanently sealed.”

The gnomes who gave up on a topic of research would permanently seal it.

Crockta and Eileen walked away from the laboratory. The gnomes at the academy were surprised to pass by the unusual combination of an orc and elf. In some cases, the gnomes would gossip about Crockta.

“That orc, is he Crockta?”

“That is a big sword. I heard that he suddenly came and slaughtered the ogres with the guards.”

“He looks different from what I expected.”

“Is that his girlfriend?”

“The best warrior has an elf girlfriend.”

The appearance of the orc warrior Crockta and the beautiful elf Eileen stood out among the small gnomes. They received a lot of attention as they headed to a special facility on the campus of the Quantas Academy.

There were guards present at the entrance of the special facility in order to control access.

“Stop! Stop!”

“Reveal your identities!”

The soldiers restrained them before Eileen took out a pass.

“I am Eileen from Ariel Academy.”

“Ah, a researcher dispatched to this city. Then, the orc next to you?”

“My guest. I will take responsibility for him.”

“I understand. Pass!”

The Quantas garrison soldiers were there to defend against theft. They opened the way. A gnome greeted them as they entered the special institute.

“Ohh! Eileen! You came!”

“Deco!”

It was a male gnome. His eyes widened as he discovered Crockta.
“Excuse me, that orc...?”

“I am giving him a tour. I will be thankful for any minute you can spare.”

Crockta extended his hand. “I am alive. I am called Crockta.”

“Ah, hello. I am Deco.”

Deco was smiling, but he didn't seem that happy. Deco threw a strange glance towards Crockta, who inwardly laughed. Eileen said to Deco, “The Demon's Mouth, can you show it to us?”

“No outsiders. It is okay with just you, but both of you...”

He refused with a sullen expression. Eileen approached and placed a hand on Deco's shoulder.

“I'm asking you Deco. Yes?”

“Ohhh...”

“Can’t we see it for a second?”

“U...Understood. But hold on a second.”

“Thank you.”

Eileen smiled sweetly. Deco turned his head away. Crockta chuckled lowly as he watched the man and woman before him.

They walked down the corridor and arrived at a firmly closed door. Warnings signs were drawn all over, as well as the words stating that entry was forbidden for those without permission.

“Place this around your neck.”

It was a necklace with divine power contained in it. Each of them received one. There was an unknown refreshing feeling coming from the necklace.

“Is this much necessary?”

“It is quiet right now, but you never know.” Deco grabbed the knocker. “Now, we will enter.”

The door opened.

A seemingly ordinary belt made of steel was lying in the middle of the lab with various experimental instruments lined up around it. Crockta's eyes were caught by the darkness surrounding the belt. It felt like he made eye contact with something.

“.....”

He seemed to hear an unknown whisper in the darkness.

“That...”

“The Demon's Mouth.”

Deco walked. The belt had a transparent wall blocking access to it. There were bright lights that shone and got rid of the darkness in the room. Nevertheless, Crockta felt an extreme darkness from the belt.

“That...it eats.”

“Eats?” Eileen asked.

Deco squirmed and said, “Literally. It eats.”

“Eats what?”

“Anything alive.”

Eileen's eyes widened. In the middle of the belt were strong steel points that looked like teeth, giving it the name of 'Demon's Mouth.'

"The center of the belt opens and eats things. A gnome has already been eaten."

"Oh my god..."

If so, this wasn't an artifact, but an evil creature.

"The identity of it...is unknown. That is why we were studying it."

Crockta looked at the Demon's Mouth and started thinking. What would happen if he wore that thing? Would it turn its master into a demon that desired blood? He got a chill and formed a fist at the words.

The door behind them opened.

"Eh?" It was a female gnome researcher. "This is a restricted area..."

Deco gathered both hands together and laughed. "I'm sorry, I just wanted to quickly show it to my friends. Please overlook it this once."

The female gnome alternated looking between Crockta and Eileen before giving a strange smile. “I understand. I’ll overlook it this time. I’m sorry, but it’s time for an inspection now.”

“Inspection time?” Deco tilted his head. “I understand. Eileen, let’s leave.”

Deco bowed to the female gnome and directed Eileen and Crockta outside. Crockta was about to leave the laboratory by following Deco.

“.....”

Something whispered to Crockta.

“.....!”

Crockta turned around. The Demon’s Mouth was still enduring the light pouring on it. Crockta confirmed the appearance of the gnome researcher walking towards the Demon’s Mouth. Her gait was slightly strange and somehow familiar.

Suddenly, Crockta stopped.

“...Crockta?”

Eileen called him from the doorway. Crockta looked at the female

gnome without answering. He grabbed the handle of his greatsword.

“Call the guards.”

“Huh?”

“Right now!”

Crockta shouted loudly. At the same time, the head of the female gnome turned around 180°.

Grotesque movements, and a mocking smile on her face. Doppelganger. The female gnome smiled before turning her head back to the front and starting to run. Crockta also rushed towards the doppelganger.

“That is a doppelganger!”

“.....!”

Eileen and Deco panicked. It was at that moment that an alarm started to sound in the laboratory.

“Everybody evacuate! Evacuate!” Someone shouted from the end of the corridor. It was the voice of the guards. “A wyvern has appeared and the academy is being attacked by monsters! Run away. Evacuate! This is an emergency situation! We must evacuate

now!”

Eileen called out to Crockta, “Crockta!”

Crockta didn’t look back. Deco tugged at the hem of her clothes.

“Eileen! We have to run away!”

“But Crockta...”

She could see Crockta aiming his greatsword towards the doppelganger. The doppelganger was stuck to the transparent wall like it was being drawn towards the Demon’s Mouth.

“Crockta!”

The door of the laboratory closed. The inside of the laboratory couldn’t be seen anymore. Eileen was dragged out by Deco. Her mouth gaped open as the scenery of the academy was revealed.

“Oh my god!”

“Unbelievable...”

Eileen and Deco moaned at the same time. There were monsters were walking around the academy campus, trolls chasing after the gnomes, and ogres aiming their clubs at their surroundings.

Kuuong!

A troll dropped from the sky. They raised their heads. Wyverns were flying around in the sky. Wyverns were flying from far away and dropping monsters on the academy.

“Oh my...

“This is impossible.”

It was a sight they were seeing for the first time. After they finished transporting the goods, the wyverns descended to the ground to look for their prey. They captured gnomes and flew them up into the sky.

“Steady yourself!”

The guards led Eileen and Deco to a safe place, but they were soon blocked by creatures.

“.....!”

A troll carrying a stone axe drooled at them.

“We need to get through! Shoot!”

The defenders lifted their magic guns and fired, but that firepower wasn't enough to kill the troll. As the troll stalled them, an ogre was drawn by the sound of the gunshots. The ogre lifted the broken debris of a building, a massive piece of rock, and took a position to throw it at the group.

“.....!”

Despair filled Eileen and Deco's eyes.

At that moment...

A ray of light struck the ogre in the back.

“Kuweeeh!”

The ogre fell down with the rock falling on it. Eileen looked back and saw a small gnome pointing a long gun from a distance.

“That will sting you!”

It was Captain Tiyo, the symbol of the Quantas' Gnomes Garrison.

Chapter 61 – The Demon’s Mouth (2)

Crockta struck down with the Ogre Slayer, which doppelganger turned and avoided.

The greatsword hit the transparent wall.

Kaaang!

It was cracked, but not broken. It truly was gnome technology. Crockta turned back towards the doppelganger.

“What the hell are you?”

The doppelganger just laughed. It had the body of a gnome, but its joints were distorted, like it wasn’t really a gnome. The doppelganger’s face was still in the air, but its body was moving around the wall, blocking it.

The corners of the doppelganger’s mouth went up as it whispered, “It is calling...”

Crockta once again swung his greatsword. The doppelganger jumped up high. It was in an instant. A tremendous speed. The doppelganger climbed on top of the barrier that was sealing the Demon’s Mouth and looked down at Crockta. The orc grasped the handle of his greatsword.

“What is calling you?”

The doppelganger opened its mouth. Crockta hesitated since he expected an answer, but the doppelganger spewed out a green liquid instead. Crockta blocked it with his greatsword. The blade blocked most of it, but he still felt pain from his right shoulder where the liquid had hit. His flesh started melting.

“Dammit!”

His body shook. It was a truly awful monster.

Crockta stepped back. It was so fast that he couldn't catch it with his skills. He would need to make the doppelganger come to him.

“This?”

Crockta pointed to the Demon's Mouth with his greatsword.

“Is this your aim?”

The eyes of the doppelganger turned strangely. Its face turned back, its eyes turned upside down, and its mouth went up. Spin. It moved like it didn't have a rigid body. The upside down face of the doppelganger laughed.

Crockta's mouth distorted as he swung his greatsword at the barrier.

Kaaaang!

He wielded it once again.

Kaaang!

The cracks on the barrier gradually widened. Crockta's attacks caused the cracks to widen even further. The eyes of the doppelganger kept spinning.

Crockta spat out, "If this is your purpose, I will bring it to you."

Crockta stabbed Ogre Slayer into the largest gap and twisted it. The barrier wall collapsed and air rushed into the interior. The moment that Crockta pulled his greatsword from the remnants of the barrier, his heart started pounding.

An unknown aura leaked out from the hole in the barrier. It was so dark that he had trouble breathing.

"Kiyaaaaah!"

The doppelganger emitted a baleful scream as it rushed towards Crockta.

"Bul'tar...!"

He brandished his greatsword, its blade cutting at the doppelganger's body. It flew to the other side of the barrier with a yelp and sagged on the floor. The skin broke apart and revealed red blood.

Its interior organs, that weren't at all like a gnome's, were shown. It was a bizarre creature. The doppelganger's eyes turned red. It stretched out a flurry tentacles that resembled a spider's legs and crawled towards Crockta. It grew beyond the threshold of a gnome's body and fired even more green fluids at its adversary.

“Kuok!”

Crockta avoided it. The doppelganger's fluid passed by Crockta and touched the Demon's Mouth.

Shaaaaaah...

The darkness moved at once. Crockta couldn't believe his eyes.

Darkness was the absence of light, but right now the darkness was swallowing up the light and filling up the interior with darkness. The light source emitting the light was buried under the darkness.

His field of view started becoming dimmer.

“What...”

Crockta looked back. The corrosive liquid sprayed by the doppelganger was now cradling the cursed belt. It gradually melted and entered the Demon’s Mouth. The Demon’s Mouth closed together.

Jingle.

The Demon’s Mouth fell to the ground with a loud sound.

“.....!”

Beyond the dim darkness, the Demon’s Mouth seemed to move.

Crockta thought that he was imagining it, but the belt really was moving. Cracks started to form at the steel teeth in the center of the belt, revealing black insides that seemed to be chewing on something.

“Kiyaaaaah...”

The doppelganger made a strange sound resembling laughter.

Crockta was gripped by an instinctive fear. He seemed to be surrounded by two evil monsters. He had to leave this place. In particular, the newly awakened demon started to emit a demonic aura that he couldn’t afford to deal with. He thought that he was

going to suffocate.

“Dammit!”

Crockta turned around. Crockta rushed towards the door of the laboratory in a strategic retreat. The doppelganger blocked Crockta by shooting its strange tentacle along the ground, its face still smiling. Crockta felt an instinctive loathing as he stabbed his greatsword downwards.

“Kiyaaaaah!”

The doppelganger dodged the attack at a tremendous speed.

Crockta kicked at the entrance. It didn't open.

“Dammit!”

It was a structure that required pulling from the inside. He grabbed the knocker and looked at the doppelganger again. That creature was now crawling towards the Demon's Mouth like it didn't care about Crockta.

He didn't want to see any more of the darkness, buried in the Demon's Mouth, that the doppelganger was heading towards. Crockta bit his lip and opened the door of the laboratory.

He started running away from the laboratory. A frightening

scream was heard from behind him.

“Kiyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Corckta used a lot of effort to turn away. He ran like crazy and arrived at the entrance of the facility. The landscape outside was revealed.

Crockta’s mouth fell open.

Pandemonium. Hell.

The bodies of gnomes were flying through the air. An ogre had the limb of a gnome in its mouth, and the wyvern was munching on pieces of bodies. The trolls were giggling as they beat at dead bodies with their clubs. Blood and flesh were scattered.

Screams were coming from all over the academy. Crockta raised his greatsword.

How did this happen? At that moment, something fell.

Kuuong!

It was a troll. Crockta looked up at the sky. Wyverns were

carrying creatures. Crockta groaned. It was an incredible sight.

He could hear gunshots from the gnome soldiers, but they were gradually stopping. In the place where the sound of shooting stopped, screams filled the empty silence.

“Crockta!”

Someone called to him.

“...Tiyo!”

Captain Tiyo of the Quantess Garrison ran over to Crockta with his long rifle. “Fortunately, you are alive dot!”

“How did this happen?”

“I’m not sure dot! Creatures suddenly came from the sky...!”

Crockta’s expression distorted as he heard Tiyo’s explanation. Evil creatures had started to attack the academy through a strange manner that had never been seen before. It was like something was calling them.

Crockta’s head started whirling as he looked at Tiyo. The words he heard in Quantess kept popping up one by one.

‘These days, many creatures are pouring from the north dot.’

‘In particular, the thing discovered this time... it is a belt called the Demon’s Mouth.’

‘Right now, the gnomes have sealed it, and are arguing if they should continue studying it or not...’

‘In particular, it has become strange recently. It is unprecedented for them to charge at Quantas like they have been these days... Those guys are too violent.’

‘It is calling...’

Crockta looked at the special research building that he just ran out of. It wasn’t just a building now, but a cave encased in darkness. His instincts were telling him that he had to go back. In order to resolve this situation, he had to face it.

However, his feet wouldn’t move. He was afraid of the darkness spreading over the entrance of the institute.

“Crockta! We have to move dot! Go dot!” Tiyo prompted.

Crockta’s attention was drawn to a small gnome running outside the academy. Crockta asked, “Can you stop them?”

“The guards will be mobilized dot! But...”

Tiyo's voice trailed off.

It was only through the combination of the walls and the Asura Thousand Wave Artillery that had allowed them to stop the monsters from the north. It wasn't easy to block creatures that had fallen inside of the walls. Maybe the worst would happen.

"...We will do our best."

"I understand."

Crockta struggled with his ominous feeling as he ran next to Tiyo.

A group of gnomes, made up of academy researchers and guards, was hiding while moving. Crockta and Tiyo rushed to join them.

"Uwoooo...!"

An ogre noticed them and charged towards them, scattering the wreckage of the buildings. The civilian gnomes shrieked.

Then Tiyo's artifact, 'General', fired. The white flash of light pierced the ogre.

"Kuoooooh!"

The ogre staggered against a building. Tiyo continued to fire his rifle. The white flashes stopped the ogres. Sweat started dripping down Tiyo's head. Unlike the other magic firearms that were charged using magic stones, 'General' consumed Tiyo's energy and magic power.

Tiyo shouted, "Run away quickly!"

The gnomes were still in chaos. Tiyo shouted again, loudly this time. As he looked desperate, Crockta swung his greatsword.

"Bul'tarrrrrrrrrrr————!"

The orc's battle cry resonated through the center of Quantess! Crushing Roar trampled on the ogre's spirit as he leaped towards the confused ogre. His greatsword pierced the ogre's thick skin.

The ogre collapsed. It tried to grab him, but Crockta hacked at it with his greatsword. After being struck by the greatsword many times, the ogre finally vomited out blood and became silent. Crockta pulled his greatsword from the ogre's body and placed it on his shoulder, blood flowing down his sides.

The image of an orc warrior covered in the blood of an ogre thrilled the gnomes. However, this turmoil called more enemies as Ogres started to emerge from other buildings. They discovered Crockta standing over the body of the ogre and roared in anger.

“Kuoooooh!”

The ogres rushed like crazy, the trolls running along with them. The wyverns drooled as they circled above him in the sky.

Crockta started laughing.

This battlefield was absurd. How likely was the possibility of victory? Any commander would be silent and pray for luck in the war. Maybe their defeat was confirmed.

Tiyo called out to him, “Crockta!”

“Take the civilians to the red building! There is an emergency bunker in the basement dot! Wait there until the reinforcements come!”

Tiyo and the guards stood side by side.

“What about you?”

“I will build a defensive line here dot.”

It was quite far away from the bunker, but somebody had to stop them. They only made a line here due to the narrow terrain.

“I will fight with you.”

“I don’t need it dot.” Tiyo grinned. “Crockta is Quantess’ guest! It is the duty of our Quantess Garrison to defend it, so don’t get in the way.”

Tiyo placed General on his shoulders and the guards also prepared their magic power. Several ogres were running. Wyverns sat on top of buildings and flashed their sharp teeth.

“Go quickly Crockta! Once again, I am delighted to welcome a guest to the beautiful city of Quantess dot.”

Tiyo laughed. Crockta thought he was a funny person with a gun, but he cracked a joke in such a dangerous moment. There were those types of people, the type to crack dark jokes before the end.

“What are you standing around for, Crockta? Go sightseeing!” Tiyo shouted as he aimed General.

The defensive line opened fire towards the creatures. Colorful streams of light hit the enemies. The civilian gnomes started running in the direction of the bunker.

Crockta nodded. “I understand. Please take care of this place, Tiyo.”

“Yes!” Tiyo yelled out in response.

“...Eh?”

The orc warrior Crockta started to run in a direction away from the bunker.

“What...”

Crockta’s body instantly disappeared. The place that Crockta was heading was the special facility that was now tinged black.

The wind and the sound of moaning. The sound of flesh being eaten in the darkness.

Crockta walked inside.

It hadn’t changed from when he entered with Eileen, but it seemed like a completely different place. It felt like he was stepping foot into a place where he wasn’t invited to. Darkness spread between him and his goal as it whispered to Crockta.

The meaning was unknown, but it was definitely evil. Dark and moist. A laughing corruption.

Crockta felt like he was walking inside of a cave.

Why had he come here?

He just didn't like Tiyo's actions. Those who pretended to be cool in such a way would regret it later as they died.

The level of civilization in Quantas was good, and there weren't many places in Elder Lord with such development in technology. A city where each room had a warm bath, where the restaurants sold delicious steaks, and where the knowledge and developments were continued in a modern academy, deserved to be preserved.

He wanted to kill that doppelganger bastard. Crockta would slaughter it with his sword. It had crawled around and laughed when it attacked Eileen, and also at the academy incident. Now Crockta would tear its face apart with his greatsword.

He stood at the entrance of the lab.

Crockta smiled. Yes, that was the biggest reason.

'It' was calling him.

He kicked open the door.

It was distant. Darkness filled the inside of the laboratory like the lights were turned off. It was a darkness that seemed to enter his body every time he inhaled. From then on, something whispered in his ears.

‘Come.’

Crockta walked forward. At that moment, two lights appeared in the darkness. They were eyes. Crockta could see that it was the doppelganger. However, it didn’t move in its normal bizarre manner. It approached Crockta like it was an empty doll.

Chobeok. Chobeok.

The doppelganger extended something to Crockta.

It was ‘it.’ Crockta looked at the doppelganger, which was no longer alive. The doppelganger was consumed by ‘it.’

It whispered to Crockta.

.....

Demons liked gambling and sweet temptation. They laughed as they swallowed the duped humans. How about this time?

Right now, Quantas’ fate was up to him. Their survival was on his shoulders.

The bonus stage. Maybe it was the final stage. Would he accept or turn around?

Crockta responded, “You cocky bastard.”

Crockta laughed and placed ‘it’ on his waist.

Chapter 62 – The Demon's Mouth (3)

Crockta walked through the darkness, moving downwards every time he took a step. It was like sinking into a dark swamp.

Crockta stared at the darkness that was surrounding him. Gradually, his footsteps became heavy and the darkness that couldn't be repulsed swallowed his whole body. Moans were heard inside the darkness. An abyss.

His flesh would be erased. Only his spirit moved in the darkness. He couldn't tell if he was seeing darkness, or if his vision was so broken that he couldn't recognize anything. He felt drowsy.

Then someone said.

‘The world is a parabola.’

A single ray of light emerged in the darkness. It was small and slender, like a firefly, as it moved in a gentle curve.

‘Everything that rises will eventually sink.’

The light fell down. There were no traces of it left. It became dark again like there had been nothing there from the beginning.

‘It is small.’

‘It blows away like dust in a void.’

Crockta was standing now. He raised his gaze. It was a battlefield.

‘That is the world.’

The sky was red. The ground was black. In this place where the boundary between heaven and earth were broken, many people were killed. Orcs and humans rushed towards each other in a confrontation. It was a strange war filled with the living and the dead.

A human screamed in pain. His head flew through the air. The orc who cut at him roared. Then a sword was stuck in the back of his head.

Blades crossed. There was a rain of blood.

Gradually, it started moving further away. The terrible battlefield moved further towards the horizon. The continent was seen on the horizon and then the sea was seen. The outline of a round planet appeared.

It was the view of a star that didn’t care about the cries of small beings. But the view kept on endlessly expanding.

The galaxy. The endless darkness and dust of the galaxy appeared.

The universe. Everything faded for a while. Even that just became a dot.

‘The world is just an empty place.’

Life and death were just fleeting moments. Crockta’s soul rattled as the darkness and void enveloped his mind. Depression, emptiness, and resignation pulled him towards hell. He kept falling. Even this rise and fall was pointless.

Suddenly, someone called out to him, “Oppa, what are you doing?”

Jung Ian shook his head.

“Huh?”

Jung Ian looked around. This was Café Reason. Ah, that’s right. After finishing school, Jung Yiyu had come to the café to play and asked him for a latte. For a moment, he had a different thought. Jung Yiyu narrowed her eyes.

“What were you thinking?”

“Uhh...nothing.”

“You should focus, Boss,” Jung Yiyu said with a smile. Ian

laughed.

Then her face melted and her flesh dripped down her chin. As Jung Ian looked at her, she became a skeleton.

“Ah...”

Jung Ian freaked out and retreated.

‘When it comes to life, everything sinks eventually.’

The skeletal Jung Yiyu cocked her head. Jung Ian staggered as he could no longer control his body. Suddenly, a voice was heard from next to him, “Boss, what are you doing now?”

It was Han Yeori’s voice. Jung Ian stuttered as he grabbed her arm.

“Yeori, you see, now, Yiyu...”

His fingers touched something cold. His head became blank as a collection of white bones smiled at him.

“Yes?”

‘I see life and I laugh death and I cry. Life is truly a fleeting moment while death is an eternity.’

Jung Ian froze as the world came tumbling down. In the infinite time, he sank into eternal darkness.

Life.

An unlimited void caught up. He held onto his hair as he shook his head and stared into the core of darkness.

‘Look.’

‘This is the world.’

The boundaries were crumbling. Once again, Crockta stood in the darkness.

The Demon’s Mouth was smiling at his waist. A perverted consciousness that melted in with the darkness. He had to overcome it. No, winning or losing was pointless at this moment, as any thoughts fled into the emptiness of the void.

Crockta dropped his head.

The ‘it’ on his waist constantly whispered to him about the notion of emptiness. The malice and emptiness mixed up in his head. It felt like his body was going to burst. His blood vessels enlarged and he vomited.

Crockta's soul screamed.

'The world is a void.'

Tiyo ran towards the bunker with the defenders.

All of a sudden, the ogres had become silent. The wyverns stopped. The creatures stood still and looked somewhere. Despite his confusion, Tiyo quickly led the guards. The defenders moved in unison under his leadership.

"The creatures have become silent all of a sudden! This is an opportunity dot!"

"Evacuate!"

The gnomes ran. They were approaching the building where the bunker was located when the ground shook.

Kuuong!

The running gnomes lost their balance and fell. Only Tiyo barely managed to keep his balance as he encouraged the soldiers. He looked behind him. Something was walking towards them.

The person was big but smaller than an ogre. He looked familiar but also strange. Green skin, a tough face, and tough body. He was holding a greatsword. It was Crockta. But Tiyo instinctively recoiled. It was Crockta's shape but he looked different. An unknown dark aura was coming from him.

Crockta's eyes were tinged red. Creatures like ogres and trolls were walking behind him. The wyverns hovered over Crockta's head and made a bizarre sound. Crockta pointed towards Tiyo and the gnome garrison.

Then the creatures started to rush at them. The ground shook as the ogres rushed towards them. The gnomes couldn't regroup so they failed to resist.

Tiyo also dropped the muzzle of General. Resistance was futile.

The ogres surrounded the gnomes. They opened a path. Crockta was walking over from the distance. As if he was the ruler, the creatures moved according to his gestures. Tiyo discovered the belt around Crockta's waist.

“.....!”

Everything made sense. That was the problem. It was due to the cursed artifact that all the monsters became wild and invaded the city. Crockta discovered it first and tried to fight against the Demon's Mouth for Quantas, but he was eaten by it.

Tiyo gritted his teeth as he grasped General. The muzzle flashed before the ogres could react. However, Crockta instantly swung the greatsword and blocked the magic bullet. The bullets were deflected.

An ogre waved its hand.

“Ack!”

Tiyo’s small body flew through the air at the ogre’s punch. He didn’t let the queasiness stop him from raising his head. The orc was looking down at him. Crockta’s red eyes weren’t those of the honorable warrior Crockta that he knew.

“Grrrrr...”

He had been devoured by the evil of the artifact. He raised his greatsword. Tiyo closed his eyes.

The moment that the greatsword was about to fall,

“We are orcs... The mighty orcs...”

The greatsword hesitated. Tiyo kept singing.

“The great warriors have appeared...”

It was the orc sound that Crockta had drunkenly sung for Tiyo and the Quantes garrison. It was beyond ridiculous.

“Humans get lost, elves get lost, dwarves get lost... Gnomes...”

Crockta’s greatsword trembled. Tiyo opened his eyes. Crockta’s distorted face was visible.

Tiyo laughed, “What are you doing Crockta?”

“.....”

“Don’t you have to go somewhere?”

The greatsword paused in the air and didn’t move. It shook like he was fighting something invisible. Soon, the steel teeth on the belt at Crockta’s waist started moving.

The teeth slowly opened. Since there was a crisis, the belt was trying to swallow the foolish gnome that shook its host.

The moment that the steel teeth moved to cover the gnome. The greatsword moved.

Crockta groaned from within the abyss.

The demon within the Demon's mouth constantly whispered to him. Everything he deemed important was collapsing. The demon fed on his despair and dominated his body. He was faintly aware that he was trying to kill Tiyo with his greatsword. But Crockta thought that it might be better.

People would just die anyway. However, Crockta temporarily regained control of his body as the greatsword moved towards Tiyo's body. He resisted the demon but it continued to whisper things to Crockta.

His soul was suffering. Physical pain was nothing compared to the pain of the soul. Crockta's spirit was broken. The demon at his waist opened and was trying to swallow Tiyo.

Crockta moaned.

"Strength." Crockta kept repeating it. "Don't give in."

"Whoever, please give me strength."

At that moment, a brilliant light burst out. It was a radiance that seemed to blind him. Crockta closed his eyes. Then he opened them again. There was a familiar face standing in front of them.

"Ah...?"

“Hey, it’s been a while, Crockta.”

It was him, the hawk of the north. The blue guardian of the sunrise. The pale blue standard bearer who guided the shamans. The orc shaman mentor.

It was Tashaquil.

“You?”

“You’ve been doing great things. Kulkulkul.”

Tashaquil waved his staff. The world became still. It was the same for the Demon’s Mouth and the fallen Tiyo before him. It was like looking at a stalled scene from the perspective of a third party.

“Tashaquil, how are you here?”

“Don’t be surprised. I’m not Tashaquil. It is like a residual piece he left behind... In reality, I am probably at Orcrox or Basque Village.” He laughed as he touched the Demon’s Mouth with his staff. “Have you forgotten? I gave you a power the day you left Orcrox.”

The memory of that day was revived. Tashaquil had cast a spell when Crockta was saying goodbye to him.

‘Tashaquil has granted you an unknown power.’

‘The unidentified power will settle within your body.’

‘One day it will help you.’

Now he remembered. Crockta asked, “Tashaquil, what should I do now?”

“Let’s see...I don’t know.”

“Huh?”

Tashaquil laughed, “Actually, it was a lie.”

“Huh?”

“There is no power in this spell to help you Crockta.”

“.....”

Tashaquil waved his staff and smiled. “Just when the time comes, I am supposed to tell you what you want to hear.”

“Tell me what I want to hear?”

“That’s right.”

Crockta still had no idea.

“What do you want me to say?”

“I...”

“If you want to be comfortable, you can relax your mind.” He pointed to the Demon’s Mouth and said. “That is too strong. You have done your best so you can rest comfortably. What about this?”

He seemed to be laughing. Crockta frowned and asked, “What are you talking about?”

“Oh, that wasn’t it?”

“No.”

“If it isn’t...” Tashaquil swung his staff and hit Crockta’s head.

“Ouch!”

“Then I can say only one thing.”

“What is it?”

“It’s the same if I were any other orc. There is only one word I can give you now.”

Didn’t he already know it? Tashaquil laughed. Crockta raised his gaze.

“Listen carefully.”

“Yes.”

“I’ll only say it once.”

“I understand.”

Crockta listened closely. Then Tashaquil spoke.

Just like it was alive, the demon’s teeth protruded from the steel belt and prepared to bite Tiyo’s throat. Crockta’s greatsword struck it.

Kakang!

The Demon’s Mouth twisted. Then the steel teeth twisted and gave a strange shout. It was a terrible cry that sounded like it came from purgatory. Then the belt twisted like a snake and aimed at

Crockta.

Crockta stretched out and grabbed it. The steel teeth chewed in vain in front of Crockta's face. Furious noises kept coming from it. But Crockta just smiled.

“Are you afraid of the void?” Crockta asked. The Demon's Mouth made a strange sound and tried to bite Crockta. “Are you afraid of the death that you will meet someday?”

Kaaaaaaah!

“Is that why you tease people like this?”

The Demon's Mouth bit Crockta's arm. Crockta groaned but didn't let it go. Crockta swallowed back the pain and said.

“I will give you the answer that you want to hear.”

Darkness emerged from the Demon's Mouth and covered Crockta. His vision became dark. Crockta faced the darkness once again. The darkness vibrated and threatened Crockta, but Crockta didn't waver.

Then he said, “The world isn't a void.”

It stopped. The darkness became thinner.

Crockta continued speaking, “Even if the world will end someday, life isn’t meaningless.”

The darkness shouted, ‘What do you mean?’

“Isn’t this the answer that you wanted to hear?”

Crockta stared at the other side of the darkness. Now he could see it clearly. It hid in the darkness and yelled, but it was actually crouching down from fear. It witnessed the end of the world, the darkness of the universe, and became frightened by it.

“I will tell you again. Death isn’t the end.”

It turned to face Crockta. It said, ‘Prove it.’

“How?”

‘You tell me!’ It stood up and shouted at Crockta, like a young child of the darkness.

“Do you want to know?”

It didn’t answer. Crockta said, “Then follow me.”

‘What?’

“If you follow me, then I will prove it.”

‘.....’

Crockta spoke firmly.

“My life.”

It tilted its head. A fine movement. Crockta stared into its eyes. Then he spoke again, “I will prove it with my life.”

Crockta had seen it. The dark side of reality. A demon in despair.

It smiled. And...

The darkness was lifted.

As the darkness around Crockta was lifted, the Demon’s Mouth threatening Crockta couldn’t be seen. It closed its mouth and returned to being a normal steel belt at Crockta’s waist.

Crockta asked, “Make them go away.”

The belt twitched like it was unhappy and emitted a strange sound. Then the creatures stopped moving. The wyverns grabbed

the ogres and trolls and left by air. It was a stunning sight. All the creatures turned and started leaving Quantas.

Then system messages popped up.

[The Despairing Demon's Belt (Hero) has come under your jurisdiction.]

[You still can't control the power of the belt. The power of the belt has been limited.]

[The demon is sleeping.]

Crockta looked down at Tiyo who was still on the ground. Tiyo looked up at Crockta.

“Have you recovered your mind?”

“Of course.”

“I'm glad dot.”

Crockta grabbed Tiyo's hand. Tiyo got up.

“Crockta.”

“Huh?”

Tiyo said, “I want to go to the north with Crockta, dot.”

Chapter 63 – Becoming A Ranker (1)

The Demon's Mouth situation was solved by Crockta.

Crockta was awarded a medal of honor by the mayor of Quantas. The ceremony was held in the main building of the Quantas garrison because Crockta refused a large event. The mayor of Quantas was an intelligent looking gnome wearing glasses. He coughed as he looked up at Crockta, who was much taller than himself.

“Orc Crockta!”

“Yes.”

“For your accomplishments in this event, I present to you, a Quantas medal of honor.”

The guards applauded. The mayor of Quantas placed the medal on Crockta's chest on top of Crockta's leather armor. He bowed his head and the mayor jumped back as his face became level to the Demon's Mouth around Crockta's waist.

“Ah!” The mayor looked shocked for a moment before fixing his glasses and clearing his throat. “Hmm hmm! Ahem! Crockta! The citizens of Quantas will remember your heroic actions.”

“Thank you.”

Crockta nodded.

The mayor glanced at the Demon's Mouth and got down from his position.

Some gnome researchers insisted that the Demon's Mouth be reclaimed, but it wouldn't leave Crockta no matter what. When people other than Crockta tried to touch it, the steel teeth opened and tried to bite them. Even if Crockta took it off, it would fly back to Crockta after a certain distance.

If it followed Crockta like that, then there was nothing the researchers could say. It was a weird artifact. This issue seemed to be related to the message that said the power of the belt was limited due to Crockta's lack of power.

Now it was just a steel belt with some energy. Crockta confirmed the information of the belt.

[The Despairing Demon's Belt (Hero), its power is limited. Increases your strength and willpower. Increases your resistance to demonic magic power.]

It was the first time Crockta had ever heard of a Hero rating. It couldn't be sold, but it was probably the highest rated item in Elder Lord. In addition, his achievement points had risen after he received the medal.

[Orc Warrior Crockta’s reputation has greatly risen in the area around Quantes.]

[Status Window]

‘Person Pursuing the Pinnacle’ Crockta, Orc Warrior

Level: 45

Achievement Points: 116510

Assimilation: 80%.

Abilities:

Giant’s Destructive Power (Essence)

Troll’s Regenerative Power (Essence)

Leyteno’s Vigorous Greatsword Technique (Essence)

Combative Spirit (Essence)

Inward Interest (Essence)

Tattoos of Honor and Fighting Spirit (Essence)

Army Crushing Roar (Essence)

All his skills had an Essence rating.

The status window stated that the skills had reached the highest level of proficiency and could no longer be upgraded. From the Pinnacle level onwards, they seemed to require something other than just proficiency.

As he recalled Hoyt showing the ‘Pinnacle’ skill, any upgrade past essence seemed to require some type of enlightenment.

After the award ceremony, the gnomes thanked Crockta again. Crockta shook hands with the gnomes. After the small event, most of them returned to their jobs. Tiyo approached and tapped Crockta’s waist.

“Hey.”

A small gnome acting like a macho soldier was cute. Crockta laughed quietly.

“What, are you laughing?” Tiyo exclaimed.

“It’s nothing.”

“You’re quick to notice dot. Delete any irrelevant thoughts.”

Crockta laughed out loud.

There was one more piece of remarkable news. Message windows popped up.

[You have made more achievements than other users in the world of Elder Lord.]

[You have entered the list of rankers.]

[Your current achievement points ranking is 482.]

[Do you want to disclose your information?]

A ranker. His achievement points had again risen as a result of his involvement in the Demon’s Mouth incident, causing him to enter the official user rankings. It was an incredibly fast growth, compared to other normal users.

Now Crockta, no, Jung Ian, would be able to receive funding from Elder Saga Corporation in reality. After all, a certain percentage of the revenue that Elder Saga Corporation earned

from Elder Lord was allocated to the rankers.

In other words, it was a huge amount of money. It wasn't that much just yet, but it was a wealth that couldn't be compared to running a café.

Crockta shrugged. It wouldn't be a big change from his previous life. However, it seemed good enough for a few luxuries.

He refused to disclose his information.

[Your have refused to reveal your information and your information will be marked as private.]

[Congratulations on becoming a ranker.]

[I look forward to your future adventures!]

While there were some rankers who refused to disclose their information, most rankers were willing to reveal themselves. This way, they could get advertising slots and gain more wealth and honor.

Crockta laughed quietly.

Soon people would find out that a new ranker had appeared and

be amazed at the sight of a private ranker climbing up the slots. Crockta's fighting spirit was burning.

Tiyo didn't know what happened to Crockta and just looked up. "Crockta, is there something good?"

"Huhu. It is nothing."

"But why do you keep laughing? Are you still thinking about me?!"

After he offered to accompany Crockta to the north, Tiyo followed him around everywhere. He had already submitted a form to leave the garrison. Crockta accepted Tiyo because there was no reason to refuse his company.

The two of them left the garrison while talking. Crockta didn't ask anything, but Tiyo was eager to explain his situation.

"Huhu! My past suddenly surfaced after I decided to go to the north dot!"

"....."

"My father was a great adventurer dot! A true adventurer who traveled freely to the north without any fear!"

"Is that so?"

“My artifact, ‘General’, is also something that my father obtained from the north dot. I have built an excellent career as a guard but the blood of an adventurer inside me occasionally bursts out. I realized it when I saw Crockta dot!”

Crockta asked after listening to Tiyo’s explanation, “The north, how great. Then your father right now...?”

“.....”

Tiyo’s face darkened. Crockta regretted his question. According to Tiyo’s subsequent words, Tiyo’s father had gone to the north one day and never returned to Quantas. That was already a few years ago. The rest of Tiyo’s family thought that his father was dead, but Tiyo believed in his father’s survival.

“I believe that my father is still alive somewhere in the north dot.”

“I see.”

Crockta nodded.

“Then, please look after me, Tiyo.”

Crockta held out his hand. Tiyo laughed and reached out his hand. The orc and gnome grabbed hands.

“When will we leave?”

“As quickly as possible.”

“Good dot. The sooner we start, the better!”

Crockta and Tiyo set a time to meet and separated to go pack. The noisy gnome friend disappeared and the surroundings became calm.

Quantes was grieving.

The situation was resolved but many gnomes, especially those at the academy, were killed by the monsters. The bodies were extremely shattered so the gnomes from the recovery teams had felt nauseous.

A memorial ceremony was held in the square to honor them. The gnomes wore black armbands and mourned the deaths. Crockta’s mind became heavy as he watched the scene.

He looked down at the belt around his waist. It was due to this.

But Crockta wondered if it really was an illusion that the demon in this belt showed to him. The emptiness of the universe. The demon tried to cause him despair, not through the orc Crockta, but as the human Jung Ian with his sister and Han Yeori.

That strange feeling was revived again. Was Elder Lord truly just a game? Did it analyze his brain and take the smallest memories to create this realistic illusion? Or was there really something else?

He recalled something Kim Dalkwang in the old [Elder Lord Times] interview.

-I even thought about whether or not Elder Lord is a connection to another world.

When Crockta imagined the landscape of the universe he witnessed, he understood. Crockta had really been frightened at that moment. He couldn't even think that the game would end when he cut off the connection.

He wondered what the truth was. Would he find out if he went to the Temple of the Fallen God? He was walking with these thoughts through his head when someone called out to him, "Orc warrior Crockta?"

He glanced back to see two little gnomes looking up at him. Gnomes were small, but young gnomes were even smaller.

Crockta smiled and nodded. "That's right. What happened?"

The children looked at each other before handing something to Crockta. It was a wrapped cookie. One of the children asked with wide eyes, "Do orcs eat cookies?"

Crockta laughed at their innocent eyes. “Of course.”

The children laughed. Looking at their smiling faces, they seemed to be brothers. “This is a gift to the warrior who saved the city.”

“It is from our family’s bakery.

Crockta looked at the bakery down the street. The gnome who must be the children’s father waved to Crockta from the entrance. It seemed like he had given the children the cookies.

“I also want to become an orc warrior like Crockta,” One child said.

Crockta patted the little gnome on the head. “Become a gnome warrior, not an orc warrior.”

“Can gnomes become a warrior?”

“Of course.”

“Then I will be a gnome warrior.”

The child laughed and nodded. The children bowed and ran back towards the bakery. Crockta conveyed his gratitude to the father who was hugging his children and then walked down the road

again. He started thinking again.

He didn't know if this was a game or not, but he just had to do his best.

Crockta entered the inn. The innkeeper, who had previously reported Crockta to the guards, flinched as he saw the burly orc. Crockta just grinned as the innkeeper lowered his gaze. Crockta headed up to his room. He was ready to disconnect for a while before heading to the north in earnest.

Then someone knocked on his door.

“.....?”

Crockta opened the door.

“You're here, Crockta.”

It was the beautiful elf, Eileen. It seemed like she came after hearing Crockta's door opening. She smiled at him and said, “You're safe. I'm glad. I heard the news.”

“I'm glad that you're safe.”

“Can I come in?”

“Of course.”

Crockta opened the door. Eileen entered while smelling of a sweet fragrance. It was something more than body odor. Crockta glanced at Eileen. She was somehow dressed up. It seemed like she had sprayed perfume on her.

She stood in front of Crockta and slowly opened her mouth. “Crockta, I was worried. In particular...when I ran away and left Crockta...”

She trailed off. Crockta shook his head.

“Of course it is okay. Deco is well?”

“Deco is also safe. It is thanks to you.” Eileen laughed quietly. “Thanks to Crockta, the great warrior who saved Quantas from the Demon’s Mouth.”

“It is embarrassing to hear.”

“You don’t have to be embarrassed. It is the truth.”

Eileen glanced at the belt Crockta was wearing at his waist. After a slight hesitation, her white hand moved across the belt. Her fingertips rested on the steel teeth of the Demon’s Mouth.

Eileen sighed and said. “This is a horrible belt...”

“Yes.”

Her hands. Crockta’s lips felt dry. Her hands gradually moved. Her delicate hands rose from the belt and touched Crockta’s solar plexus. It was a part where his skin was revealed through his leather armor. Her fingers touched the solid orc skin.

“Eileen.”

Crockta looked down at her.

The elf’s face moved a little closer. Her bright green eyes shone. They were transparent and beautiful eyes. White skin and a straight nose. Her lips were bright red like a blooming flower.

Eileen asked in a whisper. “Are you leaving for the north?”

Crockta nodded. She looked down again then her body slowly came closer.

“I never know what will happen in life.” She raised her head again. Her body revealed her expectations to Crockta. The signs were obvious. Her eyes slightly trembled. “What about you?”

There were numerous implied meanings in her question. Crockta was silent. He didn’t want to embarrass her here. In the narrow room, Eileen looked even more beautiful.

Crockta closed his eyes. At this very moment. Why did 'her' face enter his head at this moment?

Crockta shook his head to prevent her face from rising up. Then he gently pushed Eileen away.

“Eileen.”

“.....”

“I have to say this...”

He didn't want to hurt her with his refusal. As he looked into her questioning eyes, Crockta eventually opened his mouth.

“I actually...”

Then Crockta whispered in her ear, “I...”

Eileen's eyes widened. “Ah...”

“I'm sorry.”

“I see...” Eileen looked at Crockta with sad eyes. “I understand Crockta.”

“.....”

“I think...maybe. I hope you find what you are looking for in the north.”

‘Let’s meet again one day.’ With those words, Eileen left the room.

Crockta sighed as he looked at the closed door. His mood darkened after she left the room. He could still smell her fragrance.

Silence.

System messages started popping up. They seemed to be mocking Crockta.

[The macho orc, Crockta, has rejected the heart of the beautiful elf!]

[Is your Love Mode lock a reflection of the outside world?]

[By activating Love Mode, you can recover from health conditions!]

[Your status...]

Crockta turned off the system messages and hummed the warrior's song to soothe his heart. He was an orc warrior, not anything else!

“The great warrior... The devotion of a warrior...”

Ddururu...

Chapter 64 – Becoming A Ranker (2)

Ian shut down his access to Elder Lord. He left the world of the game but his heart was still full.

Somehow, his eyes were moist.

“No,” Ian muttered, clenching his hands into fists. He was full of power with muscles and a tough lower body. Love Mode might be locked in the game, but his real body was that of a man.

But was it because he was too deeply immersed in the reality of Elder Lord that an unknown anxiety rose inside him? Was he a butterfly, a butterfly? He didn't know. He wanted to confirm it as soon as possible. Ian went out to the living room and turned on the TV.

The channel was automatically turned to the fashion show from Crystal Secret, an underwear brand. Beautiful women were strutting down the runway in lingerie.

“.....”

Wow! Indeed, he was a man. A real man should worry about the shell casings, not the bullets. Ian took a moment to sigh with relief.

At that moment, the door of his sister's bedroom opened. Ian jumped. It seemed like she just woke up, because she was stumbling around and rubbing her eyes.

“.....?”

She looked at the television. On the screen, a woman in lingerie could be seen walking towards the end of the runway and winking before elegantly walking back. Then another woman walked out in a dramatic design.

“.....”

Yiyu looked back at Ian. Ian tried to make an excuse, “Ah, no.”

“.....”

Yiyu smiled warmly and said, “I understand, Oppa.”

“No...”

“I’m going to sleep a little more. Ah, sleepy. Sleepy.”

She mumbled soullessly before turning to her room and closing the door. Ian mumbled from his spot, “No...”

Ian met his old teacher after a long time. It wasn’t Lenox or Hoyt, but Jung Ian’s, his real self, teacher.

It was Baek Hanho. They were currently at a franchise café in the area where Baek Hanho lived. The interior was clean and the staff was friendly. Ian looked at Baek Hanho after examining the café around him. Business must've been going well since he was wearing expensive things.

Baek Hanho mumbled as he tapped at a big personal tablet, "Huh, this guy, good, stay well."

He was playing Go on his personal tablet. The advantageous situation gradually tilted as his opponent ate most of his territory and his houses on the board were surrounded.

"You were too greedy."

"Hah, this, this. Ara."

Baek Hanho frowned and turned off his tablet. Ian eyed Baek Hanho with a disapproving expression. If he closed the connection like that, it wouldn't be a win or a loss. The opponent would waste time waiting for Baek Hanho to reconnect.

"That isn't Go. No, no. Penetration is cowardly."

"....."

Who was the cowardly one?

Baek Hanho asked, “What are those eyes?”

“...Is your gym doing well?”

“Fitness seems to be the trend these days. I teach them a few rough exercises. I’m not complacent and combine bodybuilding with scientific technology...”

Baek Hanho ran a gym. He didn’t teach the killing techniques that he had shared with Jung Ian, but headed a comprehensive gymnasium that dealt with basic self-defense, CrossFit, and simple combat skills.

“It’s been a long time since you’ve come. Teach those lacking guys.”

“I’m too busy.”

“Isn’t your cafe doing well these days?”

Ian laughed. “I’m busy with other things.”

“Hoh. Surely not Elder Lord?”

“Yes.”

“Look at this guy. I had to convince you to play Elder Lord...”

“Yes. It would be perfect if you didn’t talk...”

Their eyes clashed.

“Huhuhu.”

“Huhu.”

“You’ve grown, Ian.”

“I was originally taller, Teacher.”

“You’ve grown too cocky after a long time.”

“Haven’t you become older?”

“This guy.”

Baek Hanho and Ian grinned at the same time. Then they got up. They left the café and headed towards Baek Hanho’s gym. The ‘Baek Hanho Gym’ used two floors of a building. The personnel greeted Baek Hanho and flinched at his bloody gaze.

The facilities were modern. The interior was wide and free with various weights, sandbags, and even a ring in the middle of the

gym.

Ian laughed.

“It’s a ring.”

“Man, I need to play sometimes. Let’s do it over there.”

“Phew. It is a sport.”

The staff members showed interest as Ian and Baek Hanho went over to the ring.

Baek Hanho was middle-aged, but there was still no one who could take him down. It was true for the official athletes who trained here. For them, Baek Hanho was an unknown person that they couldn’t tussle with. Now he brought a strange man and entered the ring. The two people seemed to know each other well.

The other man was slim and didn’t seem special. Rather, he had a warm and gentle face.

“Manager-nim, this...”

One of the staff members brought over gloves and headgear. Baek Hanho shook his head.

“No.”

“Huh?”

Did they mean to use bare hands?

Ian and Baek Hanho took off their shoes but didn't change their clothes. Ian wore a t-shirt and jeans, while Baek Hanho wore an [improved hanbok](#).

They didn't even take off their wrist watches. This was the most natural way for Ian and Baek Hanho. They were devotees of the murderous craft aimed at killing, not suppressing. Their techniques were based on all situations, and it wasn't dependent on clothes, weight or equipment.

Those who didn't know this couldn't understand why the two of them were climbing into the ring.

“Are they planning to fight with bare hands?”

“Is there a quarrel between the two of them?”

“Are they just fighting?”

There was blood-thirst in both of their eyes. It seemed like they were going to watch the most interesting fight in the world. The gym was filled with anticipation for the next battle. However, they

were disappointed.

The movements of the two people were static and they didn't hit each other. It was the non-contact method of sparring. The two exchanged gestures without touching each other's body at all.

But their movements were great. Both moved their hands to check each other's movements, and they backed off as soon as there was an attack that would be effective. It was a strange fight where no one could tell who was harmed.

“Why isn't Manager-nim catching him?” One staff member muttered.

Baek Hanho used fearful jujitsu that destroyed the joints by reversing the opponent's strength. However, whenever Baek Hanho tried to grab Ian's clothes, Ian's hand would move nearby and Baek Hanho would quickly withdraw.

The staff members couldn't even imagine it. This was an exchange of extreme practical techniques that would break the opponent's fingers. Their techniques were different from that of mixed martial arts.

Ian and Baek Hanho exchanged several attacks. If this was a real fight, there would already be a crippling injury.

Ian laughed. His eyes had been clawed out once and his fingers almost broken three times. There were also a few hits to his

Adam's apple and solar plexus.

On the other hand, Baek Hanho would've had an ear ripped off and a kick to his ribs. It seemed close but it was ambiguous. If it wasn't for this method, Ian would've already been taken down by Baek Hanho. His joints would've been damaged straight away.

Ian came forward. The two approached, repeated their unusual movements, and they withdrew at the same time. This was Ian's loss.

"Don't play around," Baek Hanho said with a smile.

Ian shook his head. It still wasn't over. At this moment, Ian made a motion like he was throwing something.

"Hat!"

Baek Hanho ducked. But Ian immediately kicked out. His toe stopped in front of Baek Hanho's jaw. The wind pressure caused Baek Hanho's hair to blow.

"...What did you throw?"

Their practice assumed every situation was possible. If Ian had something to throw then he would admit it. It was Baek Hanho's fault for not grasping it in advance. But there was nothing to be thrown. There was a wristwatch but if Ian wanted to throw it, he would have to make the motion of throwing it.

Ian grinned. “My heart of respect towards Teacher.”

“.....”

It was just a bluff. As the tendon popped out on Baek Hanho’s forehead, he immediately grabbed Ian’s foot.

“Oh, I surrender!”

“This guy has learned something bad!”

“Wait a minute! My ligament! Tap! Tap tap!”

Techniques involving the lower body joints were considered the most dangerous. It was very common for the legs to break even in practice. Ian frantically knocked against Baek Hanho’s body.

“This brat.”

Baek Hanho released Ian and hit his head lightly. Thus, the sparring between the two of them was over. It was concluded that Baek Hanho had the advantage.

“You still have a long way to go.”

“Kuoong.”

“You haven’t even stepped on my shadow yet.”

As the two of them left the ring, one of the staff members asked Baek Hanho, “Manager, what was that just now?”

Baek Hanho and Ian looked at each other and shrugged. “There is such a thing. Don’t worry since it’s like playing between us.”

“Who is that next to you? Do you know him?”

“He is my disciple.”

“Disciple?”

They were confused. So far, Baek Hanho had never mentioned a disciple. They might have believed it was a joke but Baek Hanho wasn’t that type of manager.

“He used to be cute in the old days, but now he is too cocky for his own good.”

Ian bit back his words.

Then one of the staff members formed a fist. His fighting spirit was rising. He had studied martial arts in the past and now it was a hobby. He had received many offers due to his large body.

The person who he earnestly admired was Baek Hanho. He learned through common sense not to go against Baek Hanho. The age, weight, and techniques were the opposite of everything he had ever known. No one would believe that the staff member couldn't lay a hand on the middle-aged Baek Hanho.

If so, what about his disciple?

“Manager-nim.”

“What?”

“If your disciple is okay with it, can I have a spar with him? I want to test my skills.”

Baek Hanho looked at Ian again. “Yes.” Then he laughed and asked Ian, “How about it?”

“Teacher?”

“Rules are rules, so use regular blows.”

“No... Wait...”

Ian panicked.

The large staff member greeted him. “Please!” Then the staff member put on the equipment and climbed into the ring.

“.....”

Ian shook his head as he looked at his opponent’s size.

It wasn’t easy to overcome the difference in weight when it came to a sporting event, especially when it involved striking each other. In addition, the opponent wasn’t an ordinary person, but a man who had learned to strike properly.

“Just looking at him, he is part of the heavyweight division...”

Ian took a step back. A staff member helped him wear the headgear and the gloves. After finishing the preparations, he climbed into the ring. Ian bounced against the rope and looked down at his gloved hands. He wasn’t familiar with this type of equipment. If he made a misstep then there might be an injury today.

The staff member spoke from the other side.

“I will be gentle since I know the difference in weight. Don’t worry.”

“.....”

Ian bit his lip. Ian didn't look like it on the outside, but he had a great deal of pride and competitiveness. Now the opponent was saying that he would be gentle.

Gentle. It wasn't towards anyone else but himself.

"Thank you," said Ian, his voice sinking.

Baek Hanho saw this happen and said to the staff member by his side, "Hey, Cheolwon."

"Yes, Manager-nim."

"Bring a towel soaked in cold water."

"Huh? Yes..."

The man was confused. A wet towel? But Baek Hanho didn't say anything else. After the staff member brought the wet towel, he could see why.

"Cough!"

Their manager's disciple with the slim body was beating the opponent who seemed to be in the heavyweight division. It was too fast. The disciple avoided his opponent's fist and punched back with a technique that wasn't possible to understand through talking.

The opponent resisted, but the man pushed the bigger opponent into the corner and punched his face and belly. The actions were clean and clear. He struck whenever there was a gap.

“Kup!”

At that moment, the opponent crouched and tried an upper punch, but Ian immediately backed away but punching the opponent’s chin with both gloves. The opponent fainted. It was a mere one round.

“.....”

Baek Hanho nodded. The staff member carrying the towel realized the meaning of Baek Hanho’s gesture and climbed into the ring. He woke up the unconscious man and wiped his swollen face with a towel.

“Hrmm...”

Baek Hanho looked at Ian taking off his equipment. It wasn’t just during this spar.

“Too fast...”

Baek Hanho had felt it during the non-contact method.

Ian had become faster.

At the end, when Ian threw something and immediately kicked, Baek Hanho had been expecting Ian's kick. So he was going to grab the leg and use a joints attack. But it was too fast to react to. His heart had rattled as he saw Ian's toe in front of him. It had been a while since he felt like that.

It was the same for this spar as well.

No matter how fast Ian was, the difference in weight was clear. Therefore, he had expected Ian to struggle. But Ian's vision and speed were more than expected. No matter how big the person was, if he couldn't catch up with the opponent then it was like a battle between an adult and a child.

“This guy...?”

Baek Hanho shrugged.

Chapter 65 - Becoming A Ranker (3)

-This is [Elder Lord Weekly], where we bring you the weekly news on Elder Lord!

Yiyu yawned.

She wasn't playing Elder Lord anymore, but her friends were different. Everyone's gaze went back to the screen at once.

"I'm just going to grab a drink."

Yiyu picked up her glass of beer but nobody responded. Yiyu pouted.

They had come to this place to celebrate the end of the semester. Yiyu and her friends Park Jungtae, Yoon Bora, Kim Ari, and Ban Taehoon were gathered at the pub. All of them had recently finished their final exams and were currently on vacation.

"Look," Yoon Bora said, pointing at the screen.

-The first news this week is on the rehabilitation service emerging in Maillard, also known as the 'Rehabilitation Brotherhood'.

"Wow."

“They really are famous these days.”

Yiyu poured her beer sullenly and drank alone. Then some faces appeared on the screen. It was the three people who made Yiyu quit Elder Lord. They were the three people who PKed Yiyu. She didn't care if they were rehabilitated now.

Yiyu poured beer into her empty glass again, but Park Jungtae gave an excuse to drink it instead.

-These people specialize in rehabilitating users.

The screen showed a recorded video. Users attacking a novice user were immediately suppressed, bound, and were dragged somewhere.

The screen changed again and they seemed to be directing the users to do something.

-Use means other than violence.

On the screen, the vicious users started to do volunteer work. They helped out physically challenged NPCs, NPCs who were having a tough time, troubled users, and anyone who needed help. Once again, the screen changed and showed people constructing houses for Maillard's poor. The sweat of the users working on the construction site could be seen on the screen.

The reporter interviewed the three men who were the backbone of the Rehabilitation Brotherhood. They were currently in the middle of construction, so they were all sweaty.

-Why did you start doing this?

The man in the middle spoke,

-In fact, we were originally malicious users. We were very bad guys.

-Ahh...then what happened?

-We changed after meeting a single orc.

-Orc?

-Yes. We met him and decided to think of Elder Lord as another world, instead of just a game. The orc might've been an NPC, but he was a teacher who treated us genuinely and changed our minds, more than anyone we met in the real world. The detailed story can be found on the Rehabilitation Brotherhood's homepage.

The URL of the Rehabilitation Brotherhood website flashed on the screen as subtitles.

The reporter and the Rehabilitation Brotherhood continued the conversation on their activities and how they kept in touch with

the users after the rehabilitation. The Rehabilitation Brotherhood said that they planned to gradually increase the number of branches and that those who have been rehabilitated were already active in other cities.

-We would like to take this opportunity to ask forgiveness for the evils that we have done in the past.

-We sincerely apologize to everyone we hurt.

-I'm sorry.

The three men bowed towards the screen. The reporter tried to make them stop, but they didn't move their heads for a while.

Yiyu shrugged her shoulders.

The reporter conducting the interview changed the topic.

-It is really incredible. It isn't easy to reflect on the past and be born again. Who is the orc who rehabilitated you? What is his name?

They looked at each other. The one person grinned and replied,

-I'm sure it's a name that everyone has heard these days. He is the orc named Crockta.

-Ah...that orc!

Yiyu's friend, Ban Taehoon, looked at the screen and asked, "It is that Crockta? From Arnin?"

"The orc at Chesswood?"

"That orc, right? The orc of justice? Is he really an event NPC?"

"There is such a thing in Elder Lord. It is a game with realism, so there will be those who interfere."

Yoon Bora chewed on a snack and said, "I joined the Crockta fan club yesterday."

"What, Bora is worshipping an NPC now?"

"He's so cool. There's nobody like that these days. Although he is an orc, I can't help but praise him. Do you know what the fan club name is?"

"What is it?"

"He's an Orc, yet still Praiseworthy!"

"That is really childish. Did someone with no naming sense decide that name?"

“Do you want to go back?”

Yoon Bora hit Ban Taehoon’s head. A great blow! It deserved praise.

[Elder Lord Weekly] finished the interview with the Rehabilitation Brotherhood’s last words.

-Then, I will finish this interview with the Rehabilitation Brotherhood’s slogan.

After the reporter spoke, the three men pointed to the screen and smiled.

-Whatever bad thing you’ve done!

-You are actually not a bad person!

-We know!

Dudong! Some sound effects played before the screen returned to the studio.

Now [Elder Lord Weekly] started to analyze the topic of Crockta. His name started to be known in the community due to the Arnin rescue activities.

He reported the wrongdoings of Arnin's mayor, saved Chesswood from the big clans, and recently did something great in Quantas. In the community, Crockta was treated as a hero who implemented justice everywhere he went.

The man and woman who were the hosts started talking.

-Crockta is the hottest person at the moment. His nickname is the Orc of Justice! What do you think?

-It is amazing. He is different from the users. For NPCs, Elder Lord is a reality, so they hold onto their beliefs more desperately. That is why it is so great. They bet with their lives on the line.

-What about the rumors that say Crockta is a user? He is wearing a headband around his forehead.

-Hahaha, then he would come out. As Crockta's achievements became known, many rumors have started circulating. However, I don't think they are realistic. Orc warriors often have tattoos as decorations. Either way, there is an increasing number of orc users, thanks to Crockta.

A map of Elder Lord flashed on the screen. There was a line linking Arnin, Chesswood, Maillard, and Quantas. This was Crockta's breadcrumb trail. It was obvious that he was heading towards the north.

-It seems like he is going to the north, so he can't be a user, can he?

-Indeed. The North... maybe we will never see Crockta again.

They shook their heads like they were sad.

There were no user starting points in the north, so they had to go beyond the Forest of Creatures in order to get there. However, no user had ever come out of that place alive.

The game publishers stated that the north clearly existed in the world of Elder Lord, but it was currently left alone by users. The northern part of the continent was treated as unknown content that the users could enjoy in the future once their levels rose and their characters developed.

-Looking back, I really think that he is an event NPC made by Elder Saga Corporation. I hope that Crockta comes back safely from the north.

-That's right. I want to see the great Orc of Justice again.

The hosts shrugged and changed topics.

-Then, what is next?

-The rankers have changed. A new user has appeared like a comet

between long established rankers. Furthermore, this person is a rare type of ranker who has kept their information private. They've hopped up to rank 482.

-The non-disclosure stimulates my curiosity.

-Haha, I wanted to interview the person, but I don't know who they are. Instead, we will have an interview with the former number 500 ranker, the dwarf user Camas, who fell off the rankings, due to the appearance of a new ranker.

-Camas-ssi must be really disappointed.

-I am burning with the will to become a ranker again.

“Rankers are good. Don't they make a ton of money?”

“The profits are more than I can imagine.”

Yiyu's friends lost interest in [Elder Lord Weekly] and started focusing on drinking. As university students, they were becoming increasingly worried about finding employment.

“Yiyu is good.”

“What is it?”

“You can just work in your brother’s café if you want.”

“That’s right. Is the name Café Reason? Why did he name it Reason, instead of Yiyu?” (Yiyu is also the word used for ‘Reason’ in Korean).

“He is a brother who takes care of his little sister.”

Yiyu shrugged. There wasn’t much time left until her graduation. Ban Taehoon asked, “Should I become a full-time Elder Lord player?”

“Cut it out.”

“Oh, I hate working. A while ago, Taesung hyung returned from an embarrassing interview. Kukuku, it was funny when I heard about it. He actually fought with the interviewer.”

“Truly Park Taesung.”

They kept drinking as they talked.

The first one to tap out was Yiyu. Yiyu was a weak drinker, so her face was red and her head gradually sunk towards the table, despite only drinking beer. Yoon Bora poked Yiyu’s cheek but she didn’t move. Bora shook her head.

“What do we do about her?”

“Ah, truly Jung Yiyu. She can’t drink alcohol.”

“We should’ve started giving her Coke when we were talking earlier.”

The rest of them were fine. Park Jungtae opened his phone. “I have a way.”

“What is it?”

“I have Yiyu’s brother’s number.”

“You can just call him whenever you want?”

“He asked me to contact him if anything like this happened.”

Park Jungtae sent a message to Ian, who replied straight away.

“He is coming.”

“Wow.”

“Have you ever seen Yiyu’s brother?”

“I was the first one to see him.”

“He is completely handsome.”

“As much as me?” Ban Taehoon asked.

“Shut up.”

Of those gathered, Ban Taehoon was the only one who hadn't met Ian. The rest had already encountered him before. They left Yiyu alone and talked about their vacation plans. They all had individual goals, such as part-time work, volunteer work, studying, etc...

Then a familiar voice interrupted them, “Hello.”

It was Jung Yunji. Kim Ari was close to her, so she welcomed Yunji warmly.

“Ah! Yunji. Wow, how did you come here? Amazing. Did you come with other people?”

“We came to celebrate our exams. You as well?”

“Yes.”

Jung Yunji had also come here with close friends to celebrate the end of the semester. Jung Yunji discovered Yiyu lying on the table and laughed. “Yiyu is out.”

“Yes, that’s why we called her brother.”

“Ah...”

Jung Yunji looked at the front door of the bar. At that moment, she recalled Yiyu’s brother. Their eyes had met for a moment. Was it a coincidence? She didn’t know his name yet, but she wanted to know more.

“Are you doing well in Elder Lord?” Yunji was asked.

“Yes. I have a promising career in the Blacksmith Company.”

“You are truly amazing.”

The table was split up into separate small conversations. The bar was loud enough that each conversation was buried in the hubbub of the area.

Yoon Bora looked at the sleeping Yiyu and said, “When she is like this, I don’t think Yiyu resembles her brother.”

“Why?”

“Yiyu is nice, but she is indifferent until she gets close to someone.”

“Yes, she was like that to me at first. It was completely impersonal.”

“She has a nasty temper and won’t hesitate to hit someone, but her brother is so gentle.”

“Really? I’m curious,” Ban Taehoon said.

“Ban Taehoon, you can’t even compare to him, so don’t feel expectant.”

“What? Damn.”

Suddenly, Park Jungtae raised his hand. He was looking at someone. A man was at the entrance. It was Ian. Ian smiled as he found Park Jungtae and approached. The dim bar lighting lit up Ian’s face.

“Hello!”

“Hello.”

“Hello.”

Yiyu’s friends greeted him in unison. Ian lightly bowed before sighing as he looked down at Yiyu on the table. He nudged Yiyu to wake her up. She just grumbled and buried her face even more

deeply into her arms.

“Everybody is having fun. I’m sorry about Yiyu.”

“No. We are to blame for Yiyu getting so drunk, Hyung-nim. I’m sorry.” These were the first words that Ban Taehoon spoke to Ian. Ian laughed.

“It’s nothing. I will be taking Yiyu now. Have fun, you guys.”

Ian lifted Yiyu up, who blinked and flinched as she discovered Ian. She laughed awkwardly at Ian’s expression and leaned against her brother as they left the bar together.

“I have a bad relationship with my brother. I wish I had an older brother like that. I’m envious.”

“If I had a little sister like you...”

“Shut up.”

“You always tell me to shut up. Are you my father in law?”

“What a brat.”

Suddenly, a large set of skewers were placed before them. The group’s eyes widened.

“We didn’t order this....”

The part time worker replied, “That man went and paid for everything. This was added on top of that.”

“Wow.”

“Wow.”

Their expressions changed as they looked down at the glistening meat skewers shining from the orange lights of the bar. It was definitely oversized. It was the most expensive dish in this place. It was a dish that they found hard to afford on a student’s living expense.

“Whoa...”

“That Hyung-nim is great...”

Jung Yunji watched Ian quietly come and go and asked, “Did Yiyu’s brother come for her?”

“Uh, Yunji. Yes. You know him?”

“Do you perhaps know what her brother’s name is?”

“Oh~ Yunji is interested.” Yoon Bora laughed.

Park Jungtae replied as he grabbed a skewer, “Jung Ian.”

“Jung Ian?”

“Yes.”

Jung Ian. It suited him somehow.

Somehow the name was familiar. Jung Yunji was confused. Where had she heard that name before? Jung Yunji thanked Park Jungtae and thought as she returned to her seat. Where did she hear it?

The voices of the hosts were still flowing from the TV.

-I hope that the new ranker will disclose their information one day. I’m curious as to what type of adventurer they are in Elder Lord.

-That’s right.

“Come on, Crockta!”

Tiyo shouted as he carried a large backpack. It was now the start of their journey to the north. Crockta was also carrying a big backpack for the journey. The garrison members saluted Crockta and Tiyo who were leaving the gates.

“Please protect Quantess when I’m not here dot!”

“Yes! Captain Tiyo!”

“Thank you!”

“Come back safely!”

“Everyone saluteeeeeee!”

Tiyo seemed to be respected by his men.

Crockta swallowed the clean air of Elder Lord. It was back to adventuring. The energy of the new beginning filled his body. Their goal was the north, a fearful and unknown land that no one had invaded.

“Go Tiyo!”

“Go Crockta!”

The orc and gnome started to walk towards the north. At that

moment...

[Stella: Excuse me...Ian?]

Ian flinched and missed a step.

[Stella: Perhaps...]

“What is it, Crockta? Are you already tired?”

Tiyo hit Crockta's waist. Crockta waited for Stella's next message.

Chapter 66 – Season Of Hunting (1)

[Stella: Perhaps...where do you live in real life?]

Crockta was relieved at her question. He lied.

[Ian: [I live in Busan, Busan](#). Hahaha! Ay, come visit Busan! We have donuts and [gukbap](#)! Gukbap! Kelkelkelkel!]

(TL: Ian fakes a Busan accent during this.)

[Stella: Ah...I see. I thought I would ask since I know someone with the same name. How are you doing?]

The messages to Stella would display the name of the caller. As he acted like a man who lived in Busan, Crockta hurriedly ended the conversation. Jung Yunji was becoming dangerous. He wanted to hide his identity as much as possible.

“Why are you so dazed? Let’s go Crockta dot! The North! The unknown!” Tiyo cried out as he bounced around.

Crockta laughed. He was a cute friend.

“I, Tiyo, am going! Kiyoooooh!”

Tiyo started running ahead into a vast plain. If they looked beyond that horizon, they could see the forbidden area they were going towards. A roar emerged from Crockta’s chest, “I, Crockta,

am goingggggg! Bul'tarrrr!"

Crockta rushed forward as well. An orc and a gnome started running towards the north.

Hunting was a calm, peaceful task.

He moved within the darkness of the forest. He was the shadow, an entity the enemy couldn't notice, moving between the trees, aiming to cut off the enemy's breath.

The game that he was staring at was rare. A twin head ogre. A mutation like this didn't just appear. If a legitimate evil spirit polluted an ogre, then it became this ugly monster.

Therefore, what he needed to penetrate wasn't the mutant twin head ogre, but the core of darkness infecting it. He had aimed for the darkness a long time ago. It was his old cherished wish, but he had missed the chance.

As winter passed and the buds of spring spread across the land, the smell of that darkness started to flare up again. The decaying mutant ogre proved this phenomenon.

His mouth distorted. He had been waiting, and he wouldn't miss it this time.

Now. It came again.

Hunting season.

“.....”

Crockta touched the gnome’s shoulder.

“Tiyo?”

“Going, I’m going, really.”

Tiyo looked at the black forest and gulped. There was a thick spread of black trees that was so dense that they could only barely see inside. It felt like they were faintly moving when seen with the naked eye.

Suddenly, system messages popped up.

[You have arrived at the Forest of Creatures.]

[Wow! You have great courage to come here.]

[If you pass through the Forest of Creatures, there will be a reward for arriving first.]

[How do you like this quest after not receiving one for a long time?]

[Special achievement points will be awarded as you pass through the Forest of Creatures. If you can achieve a hidden clear condition, you will earn tremendous rewards and a title.]

[Good luck!]

Crockta confirmed the message windows. Before, he thought they were just set messages, but these days, it was obvious that an artificial intelligence was controlling the messages. The words were somewhat hateful.

Tiyo asked, “C-Crockta, are we really going? We are going right?”

Crockta burst out laughing. “Tiyo, are you going to continue like this? Are you really from the Quantas Gnome Garrison?”

“What! I’m not an indecisive person!” Tiyo jumped. “Good dot! I’ll show you! Starting from now dot!”

Then he leaped eagerly towards the forest. The small gnome couldn’t be seen after he entered the shadows of the dark forest. Crockta was about to walk after him when...

“Uwaaaaaaaaah!”

Tiyo came running back out of the forest and rolling across the ground before getting back up and running again.

“What’s going on?” Crockta drew his greatsword and shouted. There was a large shadow in the place where Tiyo had run out. It was about to come out of the forest.

Crockta was nervous.

“.....”

The identity of that shadow... was a huge spotted cow.

“...M-Monster! A monster has appeared dot!” Tiyo shouted as he grabbed Crockta’s pants.

Crockta gazed at Tiyo with cold eyes. Tiyo felt a chill as he gazed into Crockta’s eyes and looked away.

“...Moo...”

The cow cried out.

“.....”

It was just a cow.

Tiyo got up from his seat without speaking and rubbed at his clothes, “Hum hum, hum! Now, shall we go Crockta? Don’t hesitate dot!”

Then he started walking again. Crockta shook his head and followed behind Tiyo. Tiyo snooped around the cow.

“By the way, why is there a cow here?”

“I was thinking that too.”

Crockta examined the cow. It wasn’t just a wild cow. There was evidence that someone was looking after it. It stood still as they approached it and stared at them with simple eyes. Crockta stroked the head of the cow and it cried out again. It was a calm cry.

Mooooo....

It calmed the hearts of the listeners. This place now felt like a leisurely pasture, not a forest full of creatures.

“Is someone inside?”

“Are there people in this forest?”

The Forest of Creatures had long been regarded as a forbidden area that couldn't be accessed by people. Usually, people would fall prey to creatures as soon as they entered. But now there were traces of a human's touch on the cow. What was this?

Tiyo and Crockta stared at each other.

“Go.”

Now it really was the time to enter the Forest of Creatures. Tiyo climbed onto the cow.

“Crockta, lead us well.’

“.....”

The cow's tail waved. Crockta led the cow and Tiyo and entered the Forest of Creatures.

It was cold as soon as they entered.

The temperature was lowered as the dense foliage covered the sky and blocked the sun, causing everything below it to be in steady shade. The damp ground was trampled underfoot as moss flourished at the base of the trees and unknown sticky things got caught on their feet.

It felt like a bad place.

“Cow, where is your house?”

Tiyo whispered to the cow. Then the cow started to walk in a certain direction. Tiyo and Crockta followed the cow as they gradually headed deeper into the forest.

They had no way of knowing what would appear beyond the darkness. Just like mountains were often described as strange, he felt a creepy sensation as the direction seemed to keep shifting. It was a strange feeling that he had never experienced before.

Suddenly, they sensed something moving. Crockta and Tiyo flinched. Crockta placed his hand on the handle of his greatsword while Tiyo prepared General.

The moving object approached. A troll. It was a forest where trolls were common. Crockta grinned. This truly was the Forest of Creatures. Monsters like goblins or werewolves wouldn't be able to stay here.

The minimum requirement was a troll! Weak creatures wouldn't survive here.

Tiyo shouted, “Go! Crockta!”

“Bul'tar!”

As Crockta rushed out, Tiyo fired ‘General’.

It was a formation similar to how they defeated the ogres at Quantas. Tiyo would block the enemy in the back with his magic weapon while Crockta faced it directly. The troll was hit by General’s intense light and fell to the ground like it was paralyzed.

“Kiek!”

Tiyo’s General didn’t have the destructive power to kill the enemy, but it was excellent support. The troll groaned at Tiyo’s bombardment. Crockta plunged in. The famous ‘Ogre Slayer’ cut the troll’s neck.

The troll’s head and body were separated. But it was a troll. Even after the head and body were separated, both sides wriggled and moved. Bubbles bloomed at the cut surface, indicating the troll’s unique regeneration. If the troll’s head and body joined back together, it could move again.

“How great.”

“Creepy dot.”

Crockta’s recovery skill had reached ‘Troll’s Regenerative Power (Essence)’, but it seemed lacking compared to a real troll. Crockta and Tiyo exchanged glances. It was a truly great collaboration. This Forest of Creatures might not be that tough.

Crockta held out his hand and the gnome hit his palm in a high five.

“Moooooooo...”

The cow gave a long cry in delight. Tiyo once again got on the cow's back with General.

“Cow, where do you live?”

The cow's tail waved and it started moving again. It was heading deeper into the forest. Crockta followed it.

The cow seemed to be familiar with the Forest of Creatures and they passed by a variety of strange things. If the cow suddenly sniffed the ground, delicious mushrooms would emerge. Once it began to cry towards the sky, there were sweet fruits.

Crockta and Tiyo bit a red fruit. The cow also nibbled at the fragrant mushroom.

“It seems very familiar with this place dot.”

“It really seems to live here.”

As they continued walking with the cow, the shape of a house started to appear. Crockta lowered his body. The cow was tame but

there was no law saying that the owner of the house would be. Besides, the person was strong enough to live in the Forest of Creatures.

The house was surrounded by a moat and a sharp fence. Their bodies would be pierced by a sharp barricade if they approached without thinking.

Tiyo said.

“A magic circle dot.”

“Magic circle?”

“Looking at the design, they don’t seem to be lacking in intelligence. It looks like this place is protected with magical artifacts. Indeed, this is how they managed to live in the Forest of Creatures.”

Tiyo analyzed. As a gnome, he easily recognized the magical engineering design. As he listened to Tiyo’s words, a faint presence could be felt in the area.

“Moo...”

The cow moved around the moat and suddenly stopped at one point. It walked through a shallow part of the moat. After crossing the moat, the cow crouched and passed through a hole in the dirt beneath the fence. It was a small passage. Despite the cow’s big

mass, it went through like a mollusk.

Then it cried out again from beyond the fence.

“Mooooo....”

Crockta and Tiyo looked at each other.

“Can we go in?”

“I am curious.”

“But it is another person’s house.”

“We can’t ignore the cow. The cow is also a member of that household! In other words, the member of the family invited us dot!”

“Um...”

He had a point.

Crockta and Tiyo used the shallow part of the moat and passed through the hole like the cow. Tiyo entered easily but Crockta’s skin was scratched by a piece of fence and he barely passed through it.

The inside was an entirely different world.

“Ah!”

“Umm.”

It was a peaceful scenery that couldn't be imagined inside the Forest of Creatures. First of all, there were two more cows. The cow that Tiyo and Crockta brought here cried out leisurely. On one side, chickens were pecking at the ground. Vegetables were growing in the garden. In the center, a solid house made of logs was standing firm. There were axes, pickaxes, and farming equipment lying around. It felt like someone had lived here for a long time.

“How great.”

Suddenly, Crockta found something among the tools. They were handmade arrows and arrowheads. Since this was a forest...a hunter.

“Look! Crockta! This is definitely the artifact that is protecting this place dot!” Tiyo shouted.

Crockta approached and saw a magic staff next to the log cabin. There was a crystal ball at the end and a blue aura flowed from it and spread out in a circle. It seemed to create a dim shield that concealed this area.

“The magic power runs down here and...”

Tiyo explained. Below the place where the staff was inserted, there were round shapes and patterns.

“This is a great technology dot.”

Tiyo’s eyes shone. As Tiyo was looking around, he accidentally nudged the staff. At that moment.

Piiing!

Piyok!

There was a sound and the magic staff lost its light.

“Eh...?”

Tiyo stiffened. The blue energy flowing from the staff suddenly disappeared. Then faint film covering this area also disappeared.

“...Ah, no.”

The shield protecting this place had disappeared. Tiyo retreated.

Crockta looked up at the sky. Wyverns were passing above them.

“.....!”

The moment that the barrier disappeared, a wyvern glanced down. Crockta's hands became sweaty. Just keep flying.

However, the wyverns started circling around.

Tiyo stuttered, “I, I, I, just...”

“Calm down Tiyo.”

One of the biggest rules of the battlefield: don't dwell on the past. It already happened, so it was meaningless to argue. They could analyze the operation or fighting techniques after it was over, but they should concentrate on the enemy when it was in front of them.

The wyverns started to flap their wings. It was the precursor to gliding.

Crockta looked around. There were two objects of prey that the wyverns could aim for. Them or the cows.

“Tiyo, there are two choices.”

“...What does that mean?”

More wyverns started appearing. The group of wyverns had flocked at the sudden appearance of easy food. Tiyo raised General.

“We only have one choice dot!”

“Kulkul, well said.”

One Wyvern started to dive towards the cows, followed by three other wyverns. Tiyo aimed the muzzle of ‘General’.

Crockta grinned. His new ally wasn’t just cute.

“As a reliable guard, I never run away from a fight dot!”

He was a real man.

The moment that the Wyvern’s sharp claws were about to grab a cow, Crockta’s roar resounded through the forest.

“Bul’tarrrrrrrrr—————!”

It was the Essence ranked skill, Army Crushing Roar! It went beyond a mere battle cry and actually affected the enemies with physical force.

The dense vegetation shook. The wyverns were shocked and

stopped their descent. The cows figured out the situation and turned to flee from the wyverns. The wyverns regained their spirits and tried to catch the cows again, but Crockta blocked them.

The greatsword tore at the wyverns' wings. One wyvern fell to the ground while the ones following scattered to the left and right. Tiyo attacked the wyverns with General.

“Ahhhhhhh!”

The wyverns spread out and soared up to the sky again. The wyverns were fast and avoided the attack. Tiyo's bullets just hit the air.

The confrontation continued with no progress. Crockta's expression hardened. They couldn't overpower the wyverns who dominated the sky. But more wyverns would come flocking soon.

“Ugh...”

Tiyo bit his lip. At that moment...

Susususuk.

A strange bolt flew through the air.

Pasasak.

One wyvern crashed.

“.....!”

“What?”

Crockta and Tiyo’s eyes shone.

Susususuk.

Once again, a bolt of light passed through the sky and another wyvern fell. The wyverns continued to plummet. Now there were no more wyverns threatening them as they all became corpses. The party couldn’t tell where the attack came from.

Crockta looked at the arrows lodged in the bodies of the wyverns.

“.....!”

Crockta approached to verify it.

Sususuk, an arrow flew right in front of Crockta’s nose.

“.....!”

Then another arrow struck in front of Crockta's foot, an obvious warning not to move from this spot. Crockta and Tiyo looked in the direction that the arrows came from.

Someone was walking towards them.

Chapter 67 – Season Of Hunting (2)

It was a large man carrying a machete at his waist. Bright eyes shone through matted hair.

Crockta spoke, “I am alive. We are...”

But before Crockta could finish speaking, the man aimed his machete at Crockta and said, “Get lost, you thieves.”

“We aren’t thieves...”

Crockta tried to explain but the machete moved even closer. The blade touched his skin. Crockta’s eyebrows twitched. But it was a fact that they had invaded the man’s home. He decided to step back.

“I understand. We’ll leave.”

The machete moved back. Tiyo, watching from the side, jumped in. “Ah! We...!”

“Shut up. Kid.”

The shocked Tiyo looked at the man and said, “What did you say? K-Kid?”

Crockta seized Tiyo before he could aim ‘General’. The man

approached the magic staff that was protecting the area. He touched something and the blue energy emerged again. It spread all over the place, creating a dim shield around the fence.

“I just wanted to say that we didn’t mean to do anything. Stay alive.”

Crockta said politely as he stood before the hole. The man glanced at Crockta and didn’t respond. Crockta shrugged and crawled out through the small hole. The man gazed after the receding Crockta and muttered, “Annoying people...”

Then he approached the cow that was staring at him. It was the cow that Crockta and Tiyo saved.

“You look well Skolla. Were there any problems?”

It was a soft voice, unlike the previous wild person who seemed like he would swing the machete at any moment. The man rubbed his cheek against the cow’s face. The cow gave a long cry.

“What?”

The man responded like he could understand the cow’s words. The cow cried out again, “Moooooooo...”

The man’s eyes deepened as he looked back. He stared at the hole that Crockta and Tiyo went through. The man spoke.

“That doesn’t mean that you owe them. They came in on their own so they can take care of the problems themselves.” The man gazed into the air before sighing. “I understand, I understand. Don’t worry.”

He approached the other cows and repeated the same greeting. Then he gathered the cows together and feed. After that, he looked at the forest that unfolded beyond the fence. This place was always damp and cloudy. A forest of darkness. Ordinary people who entered would get lost and become the prey of the creatures.

The cows drinking from the water trough gave long cries. “Moooooooo...”

The man filled his quiver with arrows. “I understand.”

“He is a very bad person. Isn’t that right Crockta?”

Crockta responded to Tiyo, “It is true though. That we were uninvited guests.”

“But we protected his cows.”

“We also called the wyverns.”

“Hmm hmm! Yes, but he called me a kid dot!” Tiyo jumped up and touched Crockta’s shoulder. “I am tall for a gnome dot! I’m not a puny kid! I’m only small compared to Crockta dot!”

“Kulkulkul.”

“Don’t laugh dot!” Tiyo whined.

They relied on the compass to head north. If they continued through the Forest of Creatures then the north would appear.

“Surprisingly, there aren’t many creatures.”

They thought that they would be attacked endlessly the moment they entered the forest, but it was more calm than they thought. In particular, there seemed to be no signs of creatures in this area. The sounds of birds and insects were gone as well. There weren’t even any wyverns occasionally roaming the sky.

Crockta touched the handle of his greatsword.

“Tiyo.”

“Huh?”

“Shh.” Crockta raised a finger to his mouth. “Go quietly.”

“What did you see...?”

“I didn’t see anything, but the area is too quiet. The Forest of Creatures is infamous for its dangerous creatures. There is only one reason for the silence here.”

“.....”

Tiyo understood what he meant and nodded. The absence of nearby living beings meant there was a nearby predator that they couldn’t tolerate. Maybe Crockta and Tiyo had stepped foot into a dangerous place.

“Let’s go quickly.”

“Understood dot.”

They killed the sound of their footsteps and started to move. Vines dangled from tree branches and covered their view. Crockta pulled out his greatsword and sliced through them. The obstacles weren’t a match for Ogre Slayer and were cut off cleanly.

“Why would that guy live here?” Tiyo muttered.

“I don’t know.”

Crockta was also curious about the man’s story. It was a talent to have pierced a wyvern in an instant. What was the reason for

living in this place? The man was apparently a hunter.

“It is in order to hunt.”

Hunters lived by hunting. They proved themselves by killing stronger game. There must be a reason for the hunter to set up camp here. What type of opponent was the hunter trying to catch here?

“.....”

At that moment, Crockta flinched. A huge shadow had just passed above him.

“What?”

Tiyo raised his head. The branches, leaves, and vines covered the sky, so he couldn't see it properly. It was just a big black shadow.

“Wyverns?”

The moment they were about to resume walking...

The shadow passed over their heads again.

“.....!”

Crockta grasped his greatsword while looking up at the sky. The big body quickly passed through their field of vision. It was obviously bigger than a wyvern.

“Tiyo!”

“I-I saw it.”

Tiyo was already grabbing ‘General’. He aimed the muzzle towards the sky, but the shadow didn’t appear again. Tiyo looked around.

“What?”

Crockta and Tiyo moved slowly as they watched the sky. At that moment, a beast’s growl resounded out from behind them, “Grrrrrrrr...”

Crockta hurriedly raised his greatsword. Beyond the vegetation and vines, the form of the giant beast was being revealed.

“That...what...?” Tiyo murmured in a trembling voice.

The enormous face of an old man was staring at them, but its revealed teeth were that of a beast. Beyond the disheveled hair that was like a shaggy mane, two wings spread open, making its size even bigger.

It was a monster with the face of an old man, the body of a lion, and the wings of a bat. It was called a Manticore, a strong monster that appeared at the end of a dungeon.

It approached Tiyo and Crockta. Crockta immediately retreated from its giant presence. The wrinkled face distorted.

“Grrrrrr....”

It was a horrible appearance. It resembled an old man but the strangely heterogeneous nature aroused disgust in him. The gangrene-infested face pushed forward and it opened its mouth wide, baring sharp teeth.

“Kraaaaah!”

The Manticore rushed forward. At that moment, Crockta almost unconsciously looked away. It was such a horrible existence. The momentum of the charge made him feel like he was facing a tank alone.

At that time, a light emerged from behind Crockta’s back and hit the Manticore.

“Grrung!”

The Manticore slowed down. The rays of light continued to strike the Manticore. It was the support bombardment from Tiyo’s ‘General’. Crockta grinned.

He was almost ashamed.

He tensed the muscles in his body and stared at the opponent in front of him. His muscles swelled like they were going to burst. He pushed against the ground with his strong thighs. Crockta leaped towards the Manticore with his greatsword.

The Manticore cried out, “Kuaaaaaaaaaah!”

Crockta wasn't phased and shouted his battle cry, “Bul'tarrrrrrrrr——!”

A near physical pressure!

The loud roar triggered the Essence rank skill, Army Crushing Roar. The Forest of Creatures instantly shook. The Manticore hesitated. A tremendous momentum was coming from the small orc rushing towards it.

Steam seemed to rise from the orc's greatsword.

The Manticore swung its paw. Crockta's Ogre Slayer and the Manticore's claws collided. Sparks flew. As soon as the two attacks clashed, the Manticore tried to bite Crockta with its sharp teeth.

“I won't allow you dot!”

‘General’ fired towards the Manticore again. The shooting was focused on the eyes. The Manticore was tormented by pain. Crockta didn’t miss the gap created by the attack and stabbed Ogre Slayer into the Manticore’s chest.

It was a greatsword that could tear even ogre skin. It made its way past the Manticore’s thick skin and penetrated the epidermis. The blade was lodged within. The Manticore screamed, this time much louder and worse than before, “Kiyaaaaaaaaaack!”

Crockta was thrown back.

“Ugh!”

It was the same with Tiyo behind him. He shook his head. Then a black aura started to flow from the Manticore. When the Manticore swung its tail, a black spark emerged and hit Crockta.

Crockta was unable to avoid it and flew back.

“Cough!”

Blood emerged. The black aura dug into his body and tried to crush Crockta. Crockta twisted his body as he tried to resist. The energy moved around his body like a snake. He sensed that if left alone, the energy would tear his body apart from the inside.

It was at that moment.

[The Despairing Demon's Belt (Hero) has responded to the demonic magic power.]

[Its resistance to demonic power is used.]

The belt around his waist started moving. The black energy retreated without invading Crockta any further. The belt's steel teeth drooled. Crockta hit the belt and calmed the Demon's Mouth down. The mouth shut and once again fell asleep.

Tiyo muttered, "That isn't an ordinary guy dot."

Now the Manticore was staring at Crockta and Tiyo with red eyes. It was already a mysterious creature but it had become more powerful after absorbing the magic power of the Forest of Creatures. The black energy was seen every time it moved.

"This is truly the Forest of Creatures."

Crockta raised his greatsword.

His tone was casual but his body was trembling. He was unsure of how to deal with it.

"I will cover you in the rear."

Tiyo manipulated the trigger of his rifle with a determined expression. He adjusted the output of 'General'. General's bullets were fired using Tiyo's strength and would eventually endanger him, but now wasn't the time to worry about that.

"We won't die here."

"Of course dot."

The Manticore neared them. Crockta's eyes shone. He read the movements of the Manticore. It shook from side to side. At that moment, the Manticore's terrible face appeared right before his nose.

".....!"

A tremendous speed. The ugly face resembling an old man looked at him, like it was possessed by an evil spirit. It swallowed Crockta's upper body.

"Uwaaat!"

His vision became dark. The stench of rotten bodies coming from the Manticore wafted into his nose. The teeth would chew on his body. Crockta closed his eyes in preparation for the moment. But the Manticore's mouth opened again. It retreated.

Crockta thrashed in search of outside air. He smelled the saliva on his body. He turned his head and checked the Manticore.

“.....!”

An arrow was lodged in the Manticore's neck. Outside of Crockta's field of view, another arrow flew, this time penetrating the Manticore's cheek.

“Kieeeeh!”

Black aura rushed out from its injury. Crockta looked at where the arrows were flying from and found the same man from before. He calmly fired his bow. Another arrow pierced the Manticore.

“What are you doing?” The hunter asked. It was far away, but Crockta could clearly read his lips. Crockta nodded and focused on his greatsword. The blood vessels in his body swelled as he firmly grasped Ogre Slayer.

Leyteno's Vigorous Greatsword Technique!

Crockta jumped up. His goal was the Manticore. Ogre Slayer tore through the Manticore's neck. It wasn't completely cut before of its big size, only going halfway.

The Manticore shrieked again. Blood poured out from its half cut neck. Crockta jumped up against to finish off the Manticore. The Manticore struggled but it couldn't resist. It completely lost its

head and collapsed to the ground.

The ground shook as the huge mass hit it.

“Hoo...”

The Manticore’s terrible face stared at Crockta. Crockta kicked it towards the opposite direction. He didn’t want to see anymore. Crockta said to the hunter, “Thank you for saving us.”

But the hunter didn’t answer. He approached the Manticore and started to dismantle the body with his machete. First of all, he cut off the skin of the Manticore’s face. Then he dissected the body and extracted a heart-like organ. A rotten smell spread out from it.

“What are you doing?”

“.....”

The man wiped the blood on the machete against the Manticore’s mane.

“...This guy’s face can drive away many creatures. The heart is a lump of muscle, but it has the power to restore energy.”

Indeed, it was the knowledge of a hunter. The man stuck his machete in the Manticore and looked at Crockta.

“Why did you guys come here? Do you like adventures?”

The hunter seemed a lot older close-up. The wrinkles on his face showed the traces of time and his beard had started to turn white, with gray hairs mixed in. However, the body was robust and didn't match the aged face.

Crockta replied, “We are going to the north through the Forest of Creatures.”

The man laughed. “What does that mean?”

“Do you know about the north?”

“It is impossible. Foolish guys.”

“Huh?”

The man scoffed at Crockta as he pulled an arrow out of the Manticore's body. “It is impossible to pass through the Forest of Creatures.”

Chapter 68 – Season Of Hunting (3)

“Why is it impossible?” Crockta asked.

The man suddenly looked at the sky. It was towards the north.

“There is no time.”

“What...?”

He packed the skin and heart of the Manticore into a sack and then he tore off the wings. Crockta and Tiyo helped harvest the Manticore’s body parts before the man, whose name was unknown, started to turn around.

Crockta and Tiyo stared blankly at his back. The man stopped moving.

“Come along.”

He started moving again. Crockta and Tiyo exchanged glances before following. The man spoke in a tone that seemed to be mocking them, “The Manticore is dead, but others will come.”

Tiyo grumbled, “Then why did you help us instead of leaving us to die?”

“I didn’t want to.” The man glanced at Tiyo with emotionless

eyes. The cool gaze caused Tiyo to flinch. “But Skolla was whining.”

“Skolla? Who is that?”

He didn’t answer.

They headed to the hunter’s home.

The landscape when they were returning was different, and even the distance seemed to have increased. They hadn’t walked that long but now it was taking a long time to get back. The direction had also changed. The compass was still pointing in one direction.

“I think the forest has changed...” Crockta muttered.

The man laughed, “This is the Forest of Creatures.”

“Is the forest constantly changing?”

“You didn’t know? You really entered without thinking.” The man adjusted the sack he was carrying. The blood of the Manticore dripped out of the bag. “Why are idiots who don’t know such things going to the north?”

“I want to find my father dot,” Tiyo replied first. “Do you know the adventurer Anato? My father was a great adventurer who went to the north dot.”

The man laughed at Tiyo, “No. I’ve never see a person go to the north.”

“Hrmm, I guess you arrived late and didn’t see him! Since when have you been here?”

The man replied in a natural tone, “For 50 years.”

“.....!”

Crockta and Tiyo’s eyes widened. The man looked like a normal middle-aged man. If he had been here for 50 years, how old was he now?

“I came here when I was 40 years old.”

“Then you are now...” Tiyo didn’t say anything else. That was already the end of the human lifespan.

“Are you perhaps a mixed race?”

“A human.”

“I can’t believe it.”

It was impossible for a 90-year-old human to be so healthy. The

man added, “I am from the Shakan Clan.”

“Shakan...”

Now Tiyo nodded. Crockta didn't understand so he looked at Tiyo, who explained, “The Shakan is an old hunter clan. I heard that they had died out.”

“Do they live that long?”

“I don't know. Not much is known...maybe he is lying but...” Tiyo lowered his voice, “The Shakan are those who never forget a grudge dot.”

The hunter clan Shakan, those who never forgot a grudge. After hearing Tiyo's explanation, the man's back looked bleak.

“But he said 50 years, so he must've seen my father. That must be a lie dot.”

“Maybe they just didn't meet each other.”

“Still...”

Tiyo stared at the man's back with suspicious eyes. This time, Crockta was the one to ask a question to the man, “Do you know about the Temple of the Fallen God in the north?”

The man shook his head as he looked ahead. The silence continued.

Crockta spoke again, "Let me know your name."

"....." The man paused for a while before replying. "I am called Shakan."

"Your name."

"Shakan."

The man was from the Shakan Clan, and his name was also Shakan. There seemed to be a story behind it.

They quietly followed Shakan.

They reached Shakan's home within a short time. The moat and thorny fence were wrapped around it. They passed through the shallow part of the moat and through the small hole in the fence, just like when they followed the cow.

Crockta realized that the fortress had no entrance and this was the only doorway. An artifact hid the presence of this place. The moat and the fence were both strong. Even so, the entrance was concealed to minimize risk.

He was a thorough hunter.

The cows gave a long cry as they returned, “Moooooooo...”

Then Shakan laughed out loud. It was a clear laugh that was unimaginable for the man who acted coldly towards Crockta and Tiyo. Shakan approached a cow and hugged it.

“Yes, I brought them, Skolla, so don’t complain anymore. Yes, yes.”

It was like he was having a conversation with a cow. Crockta and Tiyo tilted their heads.

Shakan turned towards them. His hard face had relaxed. His eyes curved as he gave a gentle smile.

“My first son, Skolla.” He stroked the cow’s head.

“This one is Penando, and the other one is Achilles.” He pointed to the cows one by one. “They are Shakan like me who will become great hunters. Say hello.”

Crockta and Tiyo bowed at the innocent expression on his face. They couldn’t tell if he was joking or if he just had affection for the cows. Shakan quickly fed the cows again. The cows waved their tails.

“It is the Shakan law to take care of guests,” Shakan said with a

mock-stern tone.

“...What is this Crockta?” Tiyo poked Crockta’s side. Crockta didn’t know either. He stepped forward and said, “That cow called Skolla is smart.”

“Huh?” Shakan looked up from where he was patting Skolla.

“Even knowing the paths in the forest...”

“The cow?”

“That cow. You called it Skolla.”

“Huh?”

Shakan stared blankly at Crockta and then looked at Skolla again. He blinked and alternated looking between Crockta and the cow. He gazed straight at Crockta.

“Ah...yes, cow...”

Then his expression changed. The traces of the man singing to the cow couldn’t be seen anymore as it returned to the same cold expression from when he first met Crockta and Tiyo.

“Yes. Cow. A cow. Is this cow smart?”

“Yes.”

“That is strange. A cow is just a cow. I just raise them for the milk.”

Crockta got goose bumps at the sudden change in attitude. It was a hard conversation.

“You introduced it as your son.”

“What?” But Shakan was still confused. “What are you saying?”

“Huh?”

“My sons are all dead.”

“You said Skolla...”

He blinked in confusion. Crockta spoke again. “You said that the cows were called Skolla, Penando, and Achilles.”

“Me?” The man was confused. What was with this expression? Then he shook his head. “...I just named the cows after my dead sons. There is no meaning. The dead are dead.”

Then he entered the log cabin. The cow called Skolla let out a

long cry, “Moooooooo...”

“.....”

Crockta felt a chill.

The man had spent 50 years in this place. He lived alone in the Forest of Creatures where no one came. It was natural to turn strange after enduring such lonely and dangerous times.

“Crockta...” Tiyo called his name from behind. “Is it okay to stay here...?”

Tiyo seemed reluctant after seeing Shakan’s behavior. Crockta placed a hand on Tiyo’s shoulder.

“I don’t think he is a bad person so let’s hear more about the forest.”

Crockta and Tiyo entered the house after Shakan.

As soon as they entered, the skull of a creature could be seen. A giant head. It was like a human but the skull was much bigger, the mouth protruded and the teeth were as sharp as saw blades. An ogre’s skull. But there were two of them. The two skulls were placed side by side like they were linked.

“Twin head ogre...?”

It wasn't just that. All types of skulls were displayed, testifying to Shakan's past. In addition to skulls, things such as hands, teeth and shin bones acted as his hunting record. It seemed like a bones museum. He hunted all these things alone in the Forest of Creatures. Hunting tools were hung in a corner. He had everything from a long bow, knives, axes and anything else that a hunter would need.

"Is stew made with vegetables and eggs okay?" Shakan's voice was heard from behind.

"Thank you."

"Just wait."

The smell of food filled the room. Crockta and Tiyo entered the kitchen. Steam was coming up from the pot that Shakan was boiling. Crockta and Tiyo sat down at the table.

"Can I do anything to help...?"

"No."

It was a cold reply. Tiyo pouted.

Within a short time, the hearty stew was finished. Shakan scooped plenty of stew into the bowl. Shakan's face seemed softer

in the warm light of the house.

“Why were you going to the north again?” He asked as he passed by. Tiyo replied.

“I want to find my father dot. Crockta is searching for the Temple of the Fallen God dot. And also...” Tiyo drank the stew and continued, “Of course, it is also to go on an adventure. I want to see new places dot.”

“Adventure...”

Shakan looked down at his fingers. “Are you curious about new places?”

“Of course dot. I can see the way that civilizations have evolved dot! Challenge and response!”

“Challenge...” He laughed. “My sons also did that.”

Crockta and Tiyo became quiet as the word ‘sons’ came out again.

Shakan got up and brought out warm milk. “My sons would’ve become great Shakan hunters. The Shakan are the best hunters.”

Shakan took a posture like he was pulling a bowstring.

“Hunters must be cautious, bold and patient. My first son, Skolla hid in the mud for over a month to catch drakes. In the end, he shot an arrow into its mouth. Isn’t that great patience? It was the first time in Shakan history that someone caught a drake. Huhuhuhu.”

Crockta and Tiyo’s spoons slowed down.

“We are the last Shakan, but I believed that my sons would spread the name of Shakan again.”

“The last Shakan...?”

“They all died. Now those who remember the Shakan have disappeared, and Shakan has become an old name. So my first son Skolla planned something huge for the resurrection of Shakan. He planned to open up the north to let the entire continent know the name of Shakan.”

“What do you mean by opening the north?”

“He said he would get rid of the Forest of Creatures with his own hands!”

Tiyo’s eyes shone.

“So he left for the Forest of Creatures. So, the source of the Forest of Creatures...that...what happened...” Shakan scratched his head. His face became confused. “Ahh...”

He grabbed his head. “What is today? Wait...my head hurts. Wait a bit...”

He left the room.

Crockta and Tiyo ate the vegetable stew in a heavy silence.

‘Father, I will open the north!’

You can’t. It is too dangerous.

‘I can do it. We are Shakan.’

The Shakan are hunters, not heroes. That thing is too scary.

‘The founder of the Shakan hunted a dragon and took its heart to open the Shakan bloodline. I’m not scared at all. We were born with dragon’s blood.’

You are obviously an exceptional hunter. Maybe even better than me. But Son...

‘I can do it. It is a mission for the last Shakan.’

Shakan chewed on the meat. His teeth grabbed onto hard muscles. He endured it. His esophagus shook as the blood rushed down his throat. He opened his eyes. Vivid memories appeared everywhere around him.

‘Father. A Shakan never forgets his enemies.’

You can’t. It is too dangerous.

‘This is my brother’s will.’

It isn’t something you can hunt.

‘There is nothing that the Shakan can’t hunt. And we are Shakan.’

My words...

‘A Shakan can’t let their enemies live!’

Reality and memories mixed together, causing his head to become heavy. The past memories weighed down on his shoulders. His breathing was painful but he endured it.

“It is that season again...”

He chewed on the last piece of meat. His spirit cleared. The iron

taste of blood reminded him of arrowheads and blades. His body was tense and his muscles swelled.

This was the last chance. Maybe these visitors were the last blessing given to him.

His end wouldn't be lonely. His sons. And...

'I can't live any longer.'

His wife.

Shakan returned. He looked cold like when they first saw him. This wasn't the man excited when talking about his sons.

There was something around his mouth.

"Your mouth...?"

"Um."

Shakan wiped at his mouth. It looked like a bloodstain to Crockta.

Shakan looked at both Crockta and Tiyo. "Do you really want to

go to the north?”

“That’s right dot.”

“Yes.”

Crockta and Tiyo replied at the same time.

“Despite the dangers?”

Crockta nodded. They had been prepared for danger the moment they started.

“Then I will let you know. There is only one way to go to the north.”

Shakan sat down. His face became solemn. Light shone on the wrinkled face.

“You must kill the evil ‘beast’.”

Chapter 69 – Season Of Hunting (4)

Shakan looked at Crockta and Tiyo, who were asleep, and went outside.

It was nighttime. He looked up at the night sky where countless stars were shining up high. The constellations could still be seen in this cursed place. The hunter was looking at a dragon in the sky.

Shakan gathered branches and started cutting arrows. One stroke, another stroke, his head cleared every time he carved the tree branches.

He couldn't distinguish between yesterday, today, or tomorrow, due to the long time he spent here. The memories of those who had already left him mixed up with the upcoming hunt. His body was already broken from the inside after eating countless creatures. His brain and spinal cord were already that of a creature.

So there was only one chance left.

He aimed at the dark forest while gauging the proportions of the newly created arrows. A good hunter only needed one shot. He had to penetrate the core of the darkness.

He muttered, "A Shakan never leaves his enemies alive."

His head was clear. The confusion in his head was no longer important as he recalled the darkness. He shrugged everything off

until only one thought passed through his head. It was as clear as day.

Kill the 'beast.' The day would soon come.

The last hunt was like this. Once the day became bright, he would leave for the hunt with two outsiders. They would be his hounds.

Kill it or die. There were no alternatives. He always sought the enemy. The beast would be aware that Shakan was moving in the darkness while it came time for hunting season.

He opened his eyes and looked up at the sky again. The constellations were growing dark. The evil nature of the forest dyed the moon red, into a capricious and wicked demon. He would cut at the middle of that moon.

"I believe in fate," Shakan said.

Crockta cocked his head at the sudden words.

They had left the fortress early in the morning. Shakan stared at the cows for a while before leaving. However, Shakan didn't treat the cows as his sons. He had the cold appearance of a hunter, just like when they first met.

Tension could be seen in his whole body. Shakan never made mistakes when he hunted.

“I don’t believe in fate.” Crockta replied.

“Just like an orc.”

“Do you know orcs?”

“The Shakan hunt anything.”

Shakan chuckled. Crockta’s eyes sharpened. Shakan smiled and shook his head, “It is a joke. I knew an orc hunter.”

“Orc hunter?”

“Yes. A hunter I acknowledge.”

Crockta hadn’t seen many orc hunters. Orcs were usually warriors or shamans. But he met one powerful hunter before leaving Orcrox. The hunter Zankus, who shot down the sun. The hunter’s eyes had glanced at Crockta like he was prey.

Shakan said, “It was someone called Zankus.”

“.....!”

“At the time, he was a fledgling, but he must’ve become quite good by now.”

Zankus was one of the praised orcs. All of Orcrox had been surprised when Zankus had arrived for Lenox’s funeral. Shakan treated that Zankus as a novice. He looked different.

He was a hunter who could handle a Wyvern and Manticore instantly. Crockta glanced at Shakan’s movements. His mind was a little anxious but there was always something to be learned from those who have reached a certain level.

Their strength was the culmination of endless discipline.

Shakan felt Crockta’s gaze and asked, “Do you have anything to say?”

Then he pulled back his bowstring.

Piing.

His arrow penetrated the forest at dawn. Something collapsed in the distance, a creature that Crockta and Tiyo hadn’t noticed.

“Hunters depend on each other. No communication will put our lives at risk.”

That was why Shakan started talking. As they walked through the darkness, the corpse of the creature Shakan killed appeared. Troll. But the whole body was decayed and the bones exposed. It looked like it had died a long time ago.

“An undead troll.”

As they headed deeper into the forest, the stronger the creatures became. It was a cursed land where creatures and dead monsters fought together.

“This is the strength of that bastard.”

Shakan seemed to know the ‘beast.’ Crockta opened his mouth, “Why do you want to hunt that beast?”

It was a question he had wanted to ask before. Crockta had a vague idea.

‘A Shakan can’t let their enemies live.’ Shakan was like a madman when he talked about his dead sons. He had looked towards the darkness of the forest when talking about the enemy. There had to be a story.

“It is as you have guessed.”

Shakan pulled out the arrow from the undead troll. The arrowhead was tinged black.

“My son wanted to hunt it and died. My other two sons entered the Forest of Creatures to get revenge for their brother and died. I lost my wife in the aftermath.”

His voice was detached as he recounted the story, “I am here for revenge, but they were Shakan. More Shakan than me.”

“I’m sorry I asked.”

“No.” Shakan stared into the darkness. Despite it being dawn, the dense vegetation of the forest blocked the sun. “I believe in fate. All Shakan believe in fate to a certain extent.”

Suddenly, something was felt in the darkness. Tiyo aimed his muzzle from where he had been quietly following behind them. Crockta also pulled out Ogre Slayer and prepared for battle.

“Maybe we were destined to meet.”

What appeared was a group of ogres. The three ogres’ eyes flashed as the group was spotted. A battle cry shook the tranquil forest. It was from Crockta, not the ogres. His momentum overwhelmed the ogres. He rushed towards the ogres with his big greatsword.

Colorful magic power supported Crockta’s charge. ‘Ogre Slayer’ tore through the forest.

Shakan had traveled across the continent and hunted everything. Sometimes he fought with orcs.

“Bul’tarrrrrrrrrrr————!”

However, he had never seen a true orc warrior. He narrowly avoided the enemy’s attacks using his battle senses and then overwhelmed the enemy with his greatsword. He seemed like a human machine that suppressed his enemies with his swordsmanship. At the necessary moment, his power would burst out against the enemy.

“Only this much————!”

Crockta shouted as he was kicked by an ogre. He stabbed the greatsword into the ogre’s abdomen, causing blood to pour out. Crockta swung his greatsword madly at the ogre. Blood dripped down. The ogre collapsed, blood foaming at its mouth.

The bloody Crockta glared at the remaining enemies. The ogres were caught by that momentum. A fighting spirit that never broke.

“Fate.”

Was it a coincidence that a warrior appeared for his last hunt? If that wasn’t fate, then what was?

Shakan smiled and pulled back his bowstring. The orc wasn’t there yet, but he would be great in the future. The image of the

hunter Zankus, whom he had met a long time ago, was superimposed over this orc warrior.

It was the duty of a veteran to give advice to the young and inexperienced.

Shakan kept pulling back his bowstring.

The two remaining ogres were forcing Crockta to be on the defensive. Tiyo's magic bullets struck one ogre while the other one aimed its huge fist at Crockta.

Shakan let go.

Shakan had the bloodline of a dragon hunter who hunted a dragon and drank its blood. The bodies of the ogres stiffened as his arrow became invisible and pierced through the two ogres at the same time.

“.....!”

There was no fuss as the two ogres fell to the ground like they were asleep. Crockta stared at him.

“A-Amazing dot.”

Tiyo also felt admiration. Shakan just shrugged. He had just pierced the required spot with as much force as necessary. If he did

that, the enemy's breath would stop.

Hunting was a tranquil task.

“Do you know why the Forest of Creatures is like this?” Crockta panted as he looked up.

They advanced while killing many creatures.

Before, they had still been at the entrance of the Forest of Creatures. Once they arrived at the center, creatures such as trolls, ogres, and wyverns endlessly attacked. Crockta's greatsword cut their necks without resting, but the creatures didn't die as they were resurrected and caught by the party again. They attacked the trio of monsters who died, resurrected, and died again.

It was a scene like hell.

“How can a crazy place like this exist? Is it really because of the legend?”

Crockta asked. It was something that Dr. Gnome from Quantes had said in passing. There was a legend that demonic power flowed out from a wicked creature buried here. To find out more, he needed to speak to the theology professor but she was missing from Quantes.

“That’s right,” Shakan spoke while picking up the arrows.

The number of arrows was gradually diminishing due to the repeated battles.

“Is there really an ancient demon buried here?” Tiyo asked as he flopped down to the ground, holding ‘General’ with a weary expression.

“Not exactly, there is a beast that has digested the body of something buried here and became a monster.”

“.....!”

“At one time, the Shakans were interested in the Forest of Creatures as a hunting ground. They wanted to know the cause of the endless creatures emerging. They eventually failed, but in turn discovered what type of monster it was.

Shaken pulled Tiyo up. Tiyo grabbed his hand and rubbed away the dirt from his ass. It was time to move again.

“I call it the behemoth.”

“Behemoth.”

“It ate the legend and became a monster; however, because of

that, it can't leave this place. I'm glad. It has regular periods of hibernation. Once a year, there is a season where it will wake up. Now is that season. The north won't open until you finally kill it."

They headed towards the center of the forest. The sun was up but the horizon was dark due to the lush greenery.

"You appeared in the season of its awakening."

"A coincidence."

"Fate." Shakan smiled. He could feel fate's hand pushing his back.

Both of them had excellent skills. Apart from the orc warrior, the gnome also skillfully handled his artifact. This was the last season of hunting and these people would open the north.

"This time I won't miss it."

An enemy he couldn't run from.

"We're here."

He could smell it. Shakan's body became tense, but there was a smile on his face. They finally got to meet again.

Last year, he had pierced its eyes, but had been forced back. He reached the point of death but it hadn't killed him. The fight between the two had gone on for a long time. For the 'beast' stuck here, he was its only entertainment.

But this was the end of a bad relationship. Either way, today, one of the two would die.

"It's coming," Shakan said.

Something was raising its body.

"Kill that guy if you want to open up the north."

Crockta and Tiyo stared at it. The two eyes of the 'beast' shone. It slowly raised its head. The behemoth looked down at them from a very high place.

"Oh my god..."

A giant monster. Thick limbs. It looked a hippopotamus and was much bigger than an ogre. It was a big monster that seemed the size of several elephants combined together.

It looked down at them and laughed.

Tiyo was overwhelmed by its huge appearance. "Something so large..."

Crockta forcibly moved his stiff body and grasped his greatsword. The enemy's size wasn't important. "Shakan. Are you willing to hunt that thing? Kulkukul."

His old habit of laughing in front of seemingly impossible missions popped up.

"Of course." Shakan's voice was determined.

Crockta declared, "Then let's go."

"Yes." Shakan pulled his big bow. He pressed his mouth against the bow. "Show me that orc warriors aren't loud and fragile."

Crockta joked, "Is it true that the Shakan aren't just bluffing rabbits?"

Shakan laughed, "I'll show you."

"I will do the same."

Just as they prepared to launch their attacks...

Bright flashes of light flew from behind them towards the behemoth.

Tiyo fired 'General' and shouted, "There's too much talking. The most courageous one here is a gnome dot!"

Crockta burst out laughing. Then they rushed towards the behemoth.

Chapter 70 – Opening The North (1)

“Its weaknesses are in its eyes and stomach!” Shakan shouted.

The behemoth’s thick skin was a near impossible challenge, so the answer Shakan found were the eyes and stomach.

“I see!”

Crockta raised his speed. Now he was almost at the behemoth. The behemoth didn’t move as it watched Crockta’s movements like it was expecting an attack. It happened the moment Crockta entered between the behemoth’s two big paws.

The behemoth stamped its feet, causing the earth beneath it to shake. The behemoth’s foot was about the size of a house, causing what seemed like an earthquake. Crockta desperately tried to avoid it while maintaining his balance. It was like a huge press machine constantly descending towards him.

“Good luck, Crockta,” Shakan muttered as he watched.

Someone had to draw the behemoth’s gaze, and Crockta was perfect for that role. The skin of the belly was pointed out as a weak point, but it was almost impossible to stab there directly. Now, the only thing that remained was their share.

“Tiyo, aim for the eyes.”

“I understand dot!”

“There is a forest where the regeneration of creatures is close to infinite. However, if you hit the eyes then you can temporarily stop it.”

In the past, Shakan had pierced the behemoth’s eyes, causing it to jump around in a huge rage. However, after a while, dark energy appeared and restored it, like the eye hadn’t been hurt in the first place.

He had been helpless in front of such an immortal monster. But this time would be different.

Tiyo’s ‘General’ emitted a bright color and attacked the behemoth’s eyes. It wasn’t lethal, but the artifact was effective in shaking the enemy and stopping its movements. The behemoth shook its head and General’s bullets started to veer from their target.

“Shit.”

“Calm down.”

“The muzzle is shaking dot...”

Tiyo lamented and started to kneel. Shakan was confused.

“Tiyo?”

Kneeling during battle. Kneeling was traditionally a sign of submission. However, Tiyo’s expression was still determined. It wasn’t the expression of a loser.

Then Shakan muttered as he saw Tiyo’s next move, “Indeed...”

This was a technique of the Quantess Gnomes Garrison. Tiyo was in a ‘down shooting’ position.

It had the highest precision that was incomparable to shooting while standing. It was a ruthless position that showed no signs of mercy, a form of marksmanship that intended to thoroughly crush the enemy.

“Aim cruelly and mercilessly.”

The earth and the body united to aim at the enemy. The specialty of a rifle that couldn’t be imitated by archery. Tiyo’s General fired.

“...Dammit!”

But his shooting was significantly off the mark. Tiyo hadn’t taken into account the behemoth’s great height. With his prone position, he couldn’t raise his aim high enough to hit the eyes. At best, he could only hit the body.

Tiyo rose to his feet again.

“Failure!”

“It was a good try though.”

As they were talking carefreely, Crockta shouted desperately from underneath the behemoth, “What are you doing behind meeeee!”

A giant paw passed right underneath Crockta’s nose. Tiyo recovered his spirit as he saw that Crockta was in danger.

“Sorry dot! I’m trying again dot!”

His short legs scrambled as he hurriedly moved to a big rock and placed the rifle onto it. It was a sitting posture firing technique. Since he could lean against obstacles, it achieved the same level of precision as kneeling down and he could aim at a higher angle.

He didn’t make any mistakes this time.

“This is the strength of the Quantes gnomes!”

The magic bullet from General precisely hit the behemoth’s eye. The behemoth twisted its head.

“Kuoooooooooh!”

While the behemoth’s attention was caught by Tiyo’s shooting, Crockta took the risk and jumped between its legs. The skin of its belly was revealed before Crockta’s eyes.

“Bul’tarrrrrrr————!”

Crockta jumped while shouting. It was thinner than ogre leather, but had a stronger defense. Steam rose as he used Leyteno’s Vigorous Greatsword Technique and stabbed firmly. ‘Ogre Slayer’ barely penetrated the behemoth’s skin. The flesh was torn by the blade.

“Kuoooooooooh!”

The behemoth shouted angrily. It was a low-frequency shout that caused the earth to ring. Crockta’s eardrums were rattled. Crockta’s body became stiff. He heard the behemoth’s big feet moving. A shadow fell above Crockta’s body. Crockta looked up blankly.

He couldn’t avoid it.

“Bul’tar.”

Crockta whispered and closed his eyes. The foot was just about to stomp on him. At that moment, a bolt flew from a distance and bounced off the behemoth.

Kwaang!

The behemoth's body was pushed back by the explosive destructive power. It was a slim arrow, but it contained enough destructive power to push back the vast behemoth.

“This is a hunter's arrow.”

Shakan readied a new arrow. Crockta started to move again. Crockta fought under the behemoth's body while Shakan fired an arrow whenever it was needed.

He placed a powerful 'will' in the arrows. In the world of Elder Lord, the possibilities were endless. Just willpower!

It hit the enemy as physical force. Some called it praying while others called it aura. But for Shakan, it was just a fierce desire to pierce the enemy. Although Crota's sword contained some will, he was just barely walking along the entrance of this field.

“Look, rookies! I am the last Shakan!”

He gave a rare scream. Crockta's spirited struggle influenced Shakan as Shakan moved his body. Now it seemed like he could kill anything.

“The Shakan hunt everything! Now it is your turn!”

The behemoth's gaze turned to Shakan like it understood. It ignored Crockta annoying it and started to move.

Kuuong!

Kuuong!

“Scatter, Tiyo!” Shakan shouted.

Shakan and Tiyo quickly retreated. But due to the difference in size, it was inevitable that the behemoth would arrive quickly. There was a huge shadow over their heads.

“Don't ignore meeeeeee————!”

A roar containing willpower!

Crockta had followed the behemoth and jumped up while swinging Ogre Slayer. The greatsword was lodged in its buttocks and Crockta clung on tightly. The behemoth shook its lower body but it couldn't get rid of Crockta.

“Don't look at anyone other than me, monster!”

Crockta grinned. Then he used the greatsword to climb to the top of the behemoth. The behemoth twisted before losing its balance and falling down. Crockta removed Ogre Slayer from its ass. The

behemoth was troubled by the pain.

“Now!”

Tiyo and Shakan launched their attacks. Tiyo’s magic bullets struck the behemoth’s body while Shakan fired arrows all over the place. The behemoth was in pain. Crockta headed towards its head. The angry behemoth opened its mouth.

Right now, the size difference wasn’t a huge advantage.

“Kuaaaaaaaaah!

It was a horrible shriek! The shout was terrible enough to paralyze them.

Then the behemoth breathed in. The demonic energy of the surrounding area was sucked into the behemoth’s mouth. Crockta stabbed Ogre Slayer into the behemoth’s back, but the behemoth continued to breathe in.

A tremendous concentration of demonic power started to form in the behemoth’s mouth. Tiyo couldn’t stand it as he turned his head and covered his eyes. It wasn’t because the light was too dazzling for his eyes.

On the contrary, the darkness was too thick. It felt terrifying; it was like his soul was being sucked in.

Shakan's opened his eyes wide and resisted it. He aimed his arrow at the darkness inside the mouth.

‘This is the behemoth's imperial wrath.’

Shakan knew that attacking its eyes and belly wasn't enough to kill it. He found out that the real weakness of the behemoth was the sensitive mouth, just like a dragon.

Just like a dragon could use breath, the behemoth was able to shoot out the deadly demonic magic. There was a short moment when the condensed energy would flash with a brilliant color. It was the authority of a breath attack.

He needed to penetrate through it. Shakan gritted his teeth. The energy was now aiming at Shakan. Tiyo was already running away. However, Shakan stood in his spot and confronted it.

“Shakan! Avoid it!”

Tiyo shouted. But the sound didn't reach Shakan's ears. Laughter emerged. A gust of wind swept through his hair. His body seemed to be pushed back. But he never moved his gaze from the center of the storm.

‘Father, we are Shakan.’

“Yes, we are Shakan.”

He didn't have a name. Only Shakan. He was Skolla, Penando, Achilles, and in addition, his dead wife. The history of all the Shakan on the continent flashed through his head. The weight of the clan was on his shoulders. Therefore, he wasn't a single hunter, but the Shakan Clan itself.

“We killed a dragon and started the Shakan lineage!” Shakan shouted like it was his last hurrah.

His voice didn't reach far, as it was swept away by the storm. But he didn't stop as he shouted again.

“I'm going to kill you! Behemoth!”

He pulled back the bowstring to its maximum extent. His will was nestled in the arrow. Both his endless hatred and resentment towards the behemoth were placed on it.

The dark breath of the behemoth converged towards him. It was the darkness that didn't allow anything to shine while erasing the world.

Crockta on the behemoth's back and the fleeing Tiyo wouldn't be affected by the disaster. They could survive.

‘Penetrate the core of darkness.’

He had no other choice. A flash of light divided the darkness. As it penetrated the darkness, it gradually became a light that swept up the darkness. The beam of light moved through the darkness. It was a straight line without any errors.

‘Open up the North!’

There was a blast.

The two forces hit each other and everything around them was swept away. Crockta fell off the behemoth’s back and rolled for a long time. He could barely raise his head after a while.

The behemoth flopped down.

Crockta relied on Ogre Slayer as he barely managed to raise his body. Black smoke was coming from the half of the behemoth’s head that remained. Shakan did it.

“Shakan!”

Crockta moved his body to search for them.

“Shakan! Tiyo!”

Tiyo avoided the breath but Shakan had faced it directly. Crockta jumped in the direction where Shakan had been.

“Shakan!”

The breath had destroyed everything. The land had a deep hole in the shape of a hemisphere. In the center of the hole was Shakan. Dust rose as Crockta hurried down the slope.

“Shakan!”

He almost fell but he managed to reach Shakan. Shakan wasn't fine. There was a pool of blood around his body in the hole. Crockta held him. Shakan had a large hole in the middle of his body. Blood and guts flowed from it.

“Crockta...”

He was near death. However, his voice was the most cheerful Crockta had ever heard it. Shakan smiled faintly.

“Did I get it...?”

Crockta clenched his teeth and endured it. Then he nodded.

“You got it.”

“How is it? Is Shakan a rabbit now...?”

Crockta smiled and shook his head. Then he touched Shakan’s cheek. It was gradually cooling. “No, the Shakan hunter pedigree is evident. You have caught your target.”

“Kuhuhuhu...” Shakan coughed up blood while laughing. Crockta calmed him down.

“Say no more.”

“It’s okay. Now there is no...”

The moment that Shakan spoke. His eyes suddenly grew larger and they trembled Crockta realized that something was wrong. Crockta could see the scene in Shakan’s eyes.

“Grrrrrrrr...”

In Shakan’s eyes, a huge creature was standing up again. It was the behemoth.

“Oh my god.”

He couldn’t recognize the shape because half the head was gone. It shouldn’t have been able to stand up after receiving that much damage. But what was the sight before him now? Crockta turned

his head.

Darkness was swirling around the behemoth's wounds. The darkness was repairing and replacing its wounds. It was missing half its head but a red light shone in the darkness.

At that moment, Crockta felt despair. They wouldn't be able to win.

He realized it. It was the first time he felt such a complete feeling of helplessness since he began Elder Lord. It was impossible to kill the behemoth.

Crockta dropped his head.

“Shakan...”

Shakan was talking, “A Shakan never leaves his enemies alive...”

His body shook. He tried to raise his body from the ground. However, his intestines flowed from the hole in his belly.

“Shakan!”

“The bag, open it...” Shakan whispered.

Crockta shook his head and spoke, “It is okay now. You've done

enough.”

Crockta tried to pacify him. But Shakan exploded angrily at Crockta. It was hard to believe the dying body could make such a sound.

“Shut up!”

“.....!”

“I told you to open the bag! Crockta!”

Crockta looked into his eyes. Fire was burning in it. An indomitable will.

That was it.

In the end, Crockta was forced to agree. He removed the bag from Shakan’s bag and opened it. A rotting stench came from the bag.

“This...”

Inside the bag was a huge heart. The core of it was already rotting. It was the heart of the manticore that they killed. It was polluted with an awful smell. Crockta held it with trembling hands.

“Feed it to me.”

Shakan said with a sigh.

“.....!”

“Put it in my mouth.”

Crockta saw the tenacity in his blazing eyes.

Then he realized.

Shakan had repaired his collapsing body by killing creatures and eating their hearts. This was why he didn't look his age, the reason for his broken mind, and why he couldn't distinguish between the past and present.

His body was already the same as all the monsters here, eroded by the demonic energy. However, his blood was still red.

Crockta was unable to resist Shakan's burning gaze and raised the heart to his mouth.

Shakan chewed on it. He opened his jaw and bit it with force. He chewed on the muscles and absorbed its blood and magic power.

His eyes were still blazing.

“The founder of Shakan killed a dragon and ate it.”

The black energy started to repair his body. His eyes were now black. He got up. The broken body had been stuck together like glue. He vomited up a black liquid. It was the same as the creatures.

“I have to become a monster if I want to kill a monster.”

He swallowed the heart until the end. His neck moved as he swallowed. Shakan laughed. He laughed as the black energy spread. He grasped the bow on his back. His eyes burned red. Soon, the creature called Shakan raised his body.

The behemoth cried out loud as it noticed his presence. The two monsters stared at each other.

Chapter 71 – Opening The North (2)

Numerous arrows flew through the air and became embedded in the behemoth's body.

The behemoth stomped its feet as it ran. Shakan quickly retreated. The land that the behemoth passed became ruined. Shakan fired his arrows but the behemoth wasn't injured. It just continued chasing Shakan. Even if there was a wound, the demonic energy would just restore the body.

The whole forest was helping the behemoth. Shakan resisted with the power he gained from chewing the heart but it wasn't enough. If Shakan's body was a pit, the behemoth was like an ocean.

Looking at the scene, Crockta thought of the most necessary action right now. The behemoth was like an army with unlimited people and resources. There was no end. Crockta needed to block the spread of the demonic energy.

But how could he cut off the magic power of the forest?

Crockta looked at the darkness that spread over the forest like an abyss. It was the wall of darkness that the behemoth was guarding. This was the wall divided the rest of the continent and the north.

No one could pass beyond this.

‘Not exactly, there is a beast that has digested the body of something buried here and became a monster.’

Shakan’s words popped into his head. There was something. At that moment, the Demon’s Mouth at Crockta’s waist started moving.

“.....!”

The belt was pulling Crockta towards the darkness in front of him.

Crockta turned around. Shakan and the behemoth were destroying the forest while fighting. Arrows flew towards the behemoth’s body while the behemoth ignored all attacks and aimed for Shakan.

Kuoooooh!

It was a fight between monsters that disregarded life and death. Shakan’s desperate resistance was felt in his commitment.

‘Hunters depend on each other.’

Shakan’s voice was revived. That’s right. They were now one. They had to rely on each other. They entrusted their lives to each other.

Suddenly, Crockta locked gazes with Shakan who was fighting. It was just a quick glance but it was enough. He made up his mind.

Crockta ran towards the darkness. As if it was waiting, the darkness welcomed Crockta. It was like when he was eaten by the Demon's Mouth. His spirit sank towards the darkness.

Crockta's spirit was standing inside a cave. It was an endless tunnel. Crockta couldn't tell where to go. The belt at his waist led Crockta. It pulled him towards the front.

The Demon's Mouth was reacting to something.

But it couldn't be reversed. Crockta pulled out his greatsword and walked in the direction that the belt pulled him. The inside was dark and his vision blurred. He walked for a while.

A large area appeared. It was a space covered in darkness. In the middle of it, a giant body was lying down. The rotten stench of the corpse pierced his nose. Crockta raised his greatsword and stepped towards it.

It was an enormous beast that wasn't any smaller than the behemoth. But it didn't move like it was dead. Crockta sensed that it was something evil like the legend. The behemoth had become a monster after eating it.

A terrible demonic energy was coming from the body. It was a darkness of an unprecedented depth that couldn't be compared to the behemoth's breath. It was the source that created the Forest of Creatures.

He had to get rid of it. If he could get rid of it, the behemoth would lose its unlimited power.

Crockta stepped forward. The demonic energy was like a swamp. Every movement was like walking through water resistance. Crockta firmly took a step forward. It seemed even bigger when he stood in front of it. What terrible thing would happen if this thing was alive? What was its identity?

Crockta stabbed the body with his greatsword. It entered without any resistance. Demonic energy emerged from the torn place. That density locked on Crockta.

“What is this...?”

At that moment. The Despairing Demon's Belt responded, “You...?”

Suddenly, the child of darkness stood beside Crockta. It was the appearance of the demon that he found inside the belt. It didn't care about Crockta as it stared at the body of the monster. Somehow it seemed sad.

‘Poor thing’ seemed to emerge from it. The demon raised a hand

towards the monster's body. A whisper was heard again.

‘Poor thing, Amon.’

Then the demon looked at Crockta. Crockta faced him. The dark eyes stared at him. Then the demon nodded and disappeared.

At the same time, the steel teeth at his waist started rattling.

“What...?”

The Demon's Mouth opened widely. It became wider, wider and wider. It was an unrealistic expansion. The greedy mouth was now bigger than Crockta. It felt like it could devour the entire cave.

The mouth swallowed the beast's remains.

The steel teeth surrounded the monster's huge body. There was a dull clang as the iron teeth closed. The Demon's Mouth slowly pushed the remains of the monster inside, like a boa constrictor devouring its prey.

“.....!”

The dead beast was being eaten by the Despairing Demon's Mouth. The demonic energy shook. Crockta gritted his teeth. His body was screaming from the overload of demonic energy. His veins bulged.

But he wouldn't lose.

Bul'tarr—!

Crockta shouted. His battle shout rang out in the darkness.

Bul'tarrrrrr—!

He shouted again. Crockta endured the pain surging through his entire body.

Some time passed. Crockta struggled for a while before he finally opened his eyes. There was nothing. The huge body and mouth that swallowed it had disappeared. Crockta stood alone in this wide cave.

He looked down at the belt around his waist.

“.....!”

The belt had changed. In the place where the steel teeth touched together, horns had sprouted. It seemed to be gradually taking the form of a demon's skull.

[The Despairing Demon's Belt (Hero) has grown.]

[You still can't control the power of the belt. The power of the belt has been limited.]

[The demon is sleeping.]

The system messages popped up. Crockta felt like his whole body was full of an unknown power. Then the landscape changed.

Crockta stood within the Forest of Creatures again.

“Kuoooooooooh!”

The behemoth's roar could be heard. He looked back and saw that Shakan and the behemoth were still fighting. It seemed like Tiyo had returned as distinctively colorful magic power was striking the behemoth.

Crockta ran towards the battle scene.

Shakan's arrow struck the behemoth's body again. The behemoth's body lurched. Little by little, flesh started falling off.

The behemoth twisted from the pain. Demonic aura emerged from the wound, but not as quickly as before. Tiyo's magic bullet

aimed towards the spot where the flesh fell off. The behemoth's body shook.

It seemed to be troubled. After the Demon's Mouth swallowed the remains of the dead beast, the behemoth lost the unrestrained magic that it had been enjoying until now.

They could win. Crockta's forehead started burning.

[Combative Spirit (Essence) has been used.]

[Your assimilation rate has risen.]

Crockta jumped off the ground. He stepped on the behemoth's tail and threw himself forward once again. The goal was the behemoth. Crockta jumped using all his strength while holding the greatsword. He used the weight of gravity to shove the greatsword deeply into the behemoth's back.

Puook!

The greatsword was stabbed up to its handle. The behemoth started experiencing spasms. Blood appeared on Crockta's face. Crockta grabbed the Ogre Slayer and twisted it. It caused another wound. There was a terrible sound.

The screams of the beast shook the entire forest. The agitated

behemoth opened its mouth.

The demonic energy of the forest converged into the behemoth's mouth. It sucked in its breath. The behemoth was once again preparing the breath attack. Its goal was the enemy with arrows in front of it, Shakan.

Crockta hung on the behemoth's back and looked at Shakan in front. Shakan didn't try to avoid it. He just aimed his bow towards the front.

Shakan met Crockta's gaze and laughed.

“Kuwooooooooooh!”

Soon the darkness of the breath covered his face. Crockta's vision was covered with darkness. The breath was bigger and stronger than before. The behemoth was squeezing out all of its power as a last resort.

At that moment. In a corner of the darkness, one bright spot flew. It was a beam of light.

Behemoth, the one who ruled the Forest of Creatures and divided the north from the rest of the continent. Then the darkness coming from the monster faded. The beam had gone straight through it.

Crockta witnessed the light penetrating the core of darkness. It

was a clear penetration.

The source of the behemoth's power had collapsed due to Crockta. It was the end of the behemoth.

Crockta rolled to the ground in the aftermath. The behemoth collapsed with the greatsword in it. He pulled it out. Dead blood flowed from it.

Crockta ran to Shakan.

“Shakan!”

Shakan was squirming in the middle of the land that had been swept away. Crockta approached. His eyes gazed far away before turning back to Crockta. His eyes were dim.

“Did...you see....”

He smiled. Crockta nodded. “It is the ultimate hunt.”

“Cough, cough! Yes, this is Shakan...”

Crockta touched Shakan's cheek.

He couldn't bear to look down at the body. The area underneath Shakan's belly had completely disappeared. The demonic energy in

his body tried to heal him, but he gradually lost his vitality and went limp.

Shakan looked into the distance. Then he smiled.

“I did it, sons...Karina...” It was a warm voice. “A Shakan never leaves his enemies alive...”

He turned his head and said to Crockta. “Orc warrior...gnome... pretty good...”

Crockta nodded. The life in Shakan’s eyes gradually disappeared. They became out of focus. It was the sight of death. What did he see?

Crockta asked, “What is your name?”

Crockta wanted to remember his true name.

Shakan’s mouth rose. He whispered in a small voice, “Shakan.”

Then his head fell down. The last Shakan hunter traversed death and entered the underworld as a nameless Shakan. The hunter who endured the pain for a long time to get revenge for his family. It was the death of a great man.

Crockta closed Shakan’s eyes.

“Crockta, you’re safe!”

Tiyo rushed over. His body was also tattered because he was caught in the breath. Tiyo became silent as he saw Shakan. The silent Crockta patted Tiyo’s shoulder.

[The quest to open the north has been completed.]

[The north has been opened.]

[The demonic energy blocking the north from the rest of the continent will gradually disappear.

[10 years remain until it is fully opened.]

[50 years remain until all the demonic energy is completely removed.]

[The name of the hero who opened the north will become widely known on the continent.]

[The name of the one who opened the north, the orc warrior Crockta...]

Crockta opened his mouth as the system messages popped up.

“No.”

Surprisingly, the output of system messages stopped.

“The name of the one who opened the north is Shakan.” He spoke firmly, “The great hunter Shakan.”

The system was silent for a moment. Then it surfaced again.

[I respect your will.]

[The one who opened the north, the last of the Shakan Clan, the name of the great hunter Shakan will shake the continent.]

[The entire continent will remember his name.]

[The ‘Shakan Hunter’ class is opened to users. Once all the hidden conditions are met, the user can change to the hidden class ‘Shakan Hunter’.]

[The name of the one who opened the north is Shakan.]

[The great hunter, Shakan.]

Crockta nodded.

[I will keep watching your progress in the future.]

“Oh, what brat! Who is it? Eh!”

This was the core of Elder Saga Corporation, the company that ran Elder Lord. It was the system control room that managed the core system ‘Albino.’ Park Jujin, the manager of this place was frantically shouting.

“No! How? Whose assimilation rate...!”

“Team Leader, the lock on the system was just released!”

“Up to 90%!”

“It is unlocked...”

“I heard!”

Park Jujin was hysterical.

The system had once again become temporarily inaccessible.

Albino's answer was the same as before. A user broke through the 90% assimilation rate. Access was temporarily blocked for both the system and the user's protection.

Park Jujin threw away the documents. The researchers ran away.

“Find that bastard!”

Zankus took a sip from the cup of alcohol. A campfire cast shadows on his face. Zankus was sharing a fire with travelers he met during a hunt. The travelers handed meat to Zankus. He nodded to express his thanks.

Then he heard the conversation between the travelers.

“The north was opened. Was it due to a hunter?”

“Yes. The last Shakan hunter.”

“He caught a monster blocking access to the north.”

Zankus's eyebrows twitched. The travelers felt his gaze and looked up.

“Why, do you know him?” One of the travelers spoke in a

friendly manner. They bumped into an orc hunter by chance but they had to maintain a minimum of courtesies. The orc was different from his appearance.

“A Shakan hunted the monster?”

“That’s right.”

“What happened to the hunter?”

“The rumor is...” The traveler became nervous as he saw Zankus’ intense gaze. “He died with the monster...”

“.....”

Zankus’s face distorted. Then he looked into the air and laughed. There was a complicated expression on his face.

“In the end...he did it and died...that person...”

“Did you know him?”

“At one time.”

Zankus’ eyes became distant.

He was the most outstanding hunter Zankus knew. The Shakan

hunter had been tougher than an orc, despite being human. He was the representative of tenacity. A hunter who aimed at his target, no matter what it took.

Zankus wanted to be just like that. So he aimed for that hunter's back. Then he would be in a position to be praised by the hunter. But Zankus felt like the hunter's back was still far away.

He heard the news that the hunter had entered the Forest of Creatures.

The traveler asked, "Was he also called Shakan? He was a really great person."

"That's right."

Zankus spoke. "No."

"Huh?"

"His real name isn't Shakan."

"Then...?"

Zankus shook the cup. He gazed into it and recalled his first meeting with the hunter.

Zankus had been a flamboyant young orc and looked down on the human. But he was defeated by him. When Zankus asked for his name with a feeling of admiration, the man became shy and avoided the answer.

His name was ridiculous. No one would believe that it was the name of the greatest hunter.

The travelers looked at Zankus with expectant eyes. Zankus laughed and opened his mouth, "His real name..."

Chapter 72 – Northern Orcs (1)

Crockta and Tiyo shifted Shakan's body and made a tomb for him in his fortress.

The clever cows cried sadly at Shakan's death. The remaining livestock, including the cows, were sent back to nature outside of the Forest of Creatures.

Then they stood in front of the wall of darkness spreading across the northernmost part of the forest that the behemoth had once blocked. It was a darkness that blocked any intruders from crossing.

[Until the north is completely opened in 10 years, access will be limited.]

[As a colleague of Shakan who opened the north, you can pass through here.]

“C-Crockta, is the north really beyond this point?”

“Trust me.”

Crockta and Tiyo exchanged glances before walking towards the wall. Darkness swallowed their vision. It was a strange feeling, as if they were floating in the darkness.

When they opened their eyes again, they were standing on red earth.

“.....!”

“This place...?”

It was a wilderness. Behind them was the wall of darkness, but the forest behind it couldn't be seen. It was like a completely different world.

“This is the north...”

It was a desolate place. Almost no vegetation was visible on the horizon, save for the occasional cactus or they deeply rooted herbaceous plant.

“Now...what direction should we go in, Crockta?” Tiyo asked.

Their destination was the Temple of the Fallen God. Crockta pulled out a map, a piece of information that he received from the Information Guild. According to this map, a large lake will appear if we move towards the northwest.

“Indeed...”

Would there be a lake in this barren climate? Crockta checked

the compass and told Tiyo, “This way.”

“I understand dot!”

Tiyo walked ahead.

Contrary to his expectations, it was a desolate wasteland, but it was still a new world. Only a few people from the continent had seen the north. Moreover, they were the adventurers who opened up the north. Tiyo started humming.

Crockta and Tiyo looked around while walking. Except for the wall of darkness, everywhere was the same. It was like the endless desert. If the desert was going to continue like this, maybe the north was just a dead land.

They would know once they followed the map. They walked for a long time towards the lake marked on the map.

“.....”

“This is the lake dot...?”

It was a puddle smaller than a pond. That was all. Crockta checked the map again. According to the compass and map, this was definitely the place. There were large pillars and rugged rock walls.

“At one time, it might’ve been a lake.”

The map had been made a long time ago. It could be different from the current situation.

“Let’s relieve our dry throats first.”

“Yes, dot.”

The moment they reached the puddle...

A sound was heard from far away. Crockta turned his head and spotted a sand storm in the distance. A group of people was approaching this place. Tiyo took a sip of water and said, “Are we finally meeting people from the north?”

“They are riding on something.”

It wasn’t the shape of a monster. It was the appearance of people riding on something. Were they orcs, humans, or dark elves? Worry was mixed with anticipation. Crockta grasped ‘Ogre Slayer’ and waited for them with bated breath.

“Crockta, what are you nervous about? They are the northern people dot!” Tiyo declared.

Crockta nodded before saying, “I hope my worries are needless.”

Then he could determine the identity of the incoming group. They were orcs.

“Hey! Who are you?”

The orc in the front shouted. There was a total of five orcs. They were riding odd-looking animals that looked like rhinoceroses, except at a size that was smaller than a horse. Horns towered up on both sides and the eyes were filled with wildness.

Crockta stepped forward. “I am alive. It is nice to see you. I am the orc warrior Crockta.”

He extended his fist.

“Yes...?” The orcs looked at each other at his greeting.

“Pff....”

“Kuk...”

They chuckled before bursting out laughing, “Kulkulkulkul! Did you hear him? Alive? Kuahahahat!”

“This guy, he must’ve heard too many stories! Kulkulkulkul!”

“My mother read me the old books as well! Yes alive, you are

alive! Kuhahahat!”

Crockta couldn't understand their reactions.

“Hey, why are you doing such archaic bullshit?”

“Why did an outsider suddenly appear in our area? In addition, coming with a dwarf.”

The orcs got down from the animals. They were using weapons such as axes and swords, but they were different from the weapons that Crockta knew and loved. The size of their weapons was small, and seemed to be human weapons.

“We are the Kapur Tribe that rules this area, get on your knees!” One of the orcs pulled out his sword and shouted. Crockta stared at him blankly. The orc stomped his feet angrily at Crockta's response.

“I said, we are the Kapur Tribe! On your knees!”

Crockta couldn't understand it. “On my knees?”

Orcs never kneeled before another of their kind. No, it was the same with other species. Orcs would never force humiliation on someone. Rather, they would raise them up. If someone insulted them, the orc would just cut off their heads.

Those were the orcs that he knew. He would understand it more if weapons were swung.

“I don’t know what you are talking about. I am a warrior and this gnome warrior is my friend ,Tiyo. Please respect our honor.” Crockta replied patiently.

But they laughed at Crockta again. One orc grabbed his belly and shed tears. “Kuahahat! Warrior? Warrior?”

“That dwarf is a warrior? Kulkulkul!”

“A very funny guy! I’m going crazy!”

Then the original orc, who shouted with a sword in hand, approached Crockta.

“This person is a madman. Kehehehet!”

Mean expressions.

Crockta realized something. “Don’t.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Don’t speak.”

The faces of the orcs distorted. “What nonsense is he saying!”

Then the orc shook his sword. But he couldn’t fulfill his will. His crude sword was smashed at once.

A greatsword, too big to be a regular sword, was pointing at his neck. It was the masterpiece of the Golden Anvil Clan, ‘Ogre Slayer’!

“You guys don’t have any honor.”

“U-Uh...?”

The orc retreated. The other orcs simultaneously raised their weapons.

“You!”

“You want to die!”

The orc who lost his weapon shouted while the other four orcs surrounded Crockta, a ferocious look in their eyes. “You attacked us just now, so we can’t get over it. This guy.”

An orc holding an axe cried out angrily, “Do you want to make us angry?”

But Crockta wasn't afraid at all. The anger of the Orcrox farmers holding farm equipment was more frightening than these orcs holding their flimsy weapons.

“Messing with the Kapur warriors...”

At that moment, Crockta's eyebrows twitched.

“What?”

“Hehe, have you finally realized your mistake? We are warriors from the Kapur Tribe. You would run away if you saw the large number of warriors in our tribe...”

Crockta looked up at the sky. The sky above him was blue, just like it was on the continent.

However, the people under the sky were different. So different. The orcs in the north were different from the orcs on the continent that he knew. They weren't great like Lenox or Hoyt. None of the orcs he knew were like this. Yet they called themselves warriors.

The warrior's ceremony presided over by Tashaquil came to his mind. Something burned inside Crockta. He was an orc warrior. When he saw something like this, he couldn't stay still.

Crockta rushed towards the axe wielding orc.

“Where are you looking?”

The axe descended. At that moment, Crockta swung his greatsword towards the descending axe. The axe shattered and the pieces flew into the air.

“Hat!”

The orc’s eyes widened as he was left with just the handle of the axe. It was a sophisticated technique that responded to the sudden attack, aimed at the axe, and used tremendous power to break it.

The serene eyes stared at him.

He wasn’t a match for this orc wearing a red headband. He realized it. The orc might act ridiculously like he was from an old storybook, but his skills were real. The axe holding orc asked in a trembling voice.

“You, where did you come from? Ragnar Tribe? The Iron Group? Or are you someone hired by the dark elves?”

“.....”

Crockta shook his head.

“Then where are you from?” The orcs stepped back cautiously. Crockta didn’t attack them anymore as he placed the big sword

back on his back.

“We came from the continent to the south dot!” Tiyo replied instead.

The orcs’ rage exploded. “Shut up, dwarf. We didn’t ask you!”

“What’d you say?”

Tiyo immediately fired ‘General’, the magic power striking an orc. He lost his balance and fell down. He shook from the aftermath of the attack and crumpled over with a groan. The group of orcs was astonished.

“T-That is an artifact!”

The orcs exchanged glances. It seemed like they were thinking about how to treat Crockta. They gathered and started to talk about something. Their voices were faintly heard, “They might have really come from the south...”

“That is nonsense...”

“If so, the chief...”

“Trouble...”

They talked for a while before nodding. Then the orc who lost his axe to Crockta stepped out as the representative. “What is your name?”

All of a sudden, his attitude was gracious.

“Crockta.”

“Crockta, please forgive our rudeness. I’ll ask you again. Did you really come from the south?”

Crockta nodded.

“Then you came over that wall of darkness?”

“That’s right.”

“Um...” The orc frowned for a moment before nodding. “Then, Crockta. You are invited to our tribe.”

It was a quick transition as a smile emerged. Tiyo poked Crockta’s thigh. He didn’t like it. Crockta was the same but he would decide once he heard more.

“I apologize for being rude to you. It is a sensitive time due to the recent war between tribes. We made a mistake for a bit. Why don’t you rest and talk with us at our tribe?”

The orc acted shamelessly until the end. Crockta didn't like it but he needed to consider the proposal itself. Crockta whispered to Tiyo, "How about it Tiyo?"

"Do you want to go with these guys?"

"Not at all. But we know nothing about the north. It might be helpful to follow them once."

"Uh... your words are reasonable dot..."

All they had was an old map to lead the way. It showed the natural terrain and the location of the Temple of the Fallen God, but they didn't know anything about cities and what the people were like.

The Kapur Clan were militant, so the north absolutely wasn't an easy place. Rather, it seemed rougher than the continent.

"My father always said that the north is a very dangerous place dot..." Tiyo muttered and nodded. "I understand dot. Then we will follow them for the moment."

"We will."

"But..."

Tiyo tapped 'General'.

“If they aren’t good, I will have to kill Crockta’s fellow people dot.”

Crockta laughed at his decisive expression. Due to the cute appearance of his gnome friend, Crockta occasionally forgot that he was a soldier. Tiyo wasn’t a person to avoid physical conflicts. Crockta showed his teeth as he laughed.

“Of course. It is the same for me.”

The orc warrior and gnome soldier exchanged glances and chuckled. As soon as Crockta nodded, the orcs pointed to the animals behind them.

“Then we will give you a ride. Please get up behind us.”

The orcs climbed on the animals they came on. It wasn’t much different from riding a horse. Crockta and Tiyo sat behind an animal each.

“What do you call these animals?”

“Are there no caruks in the south?”

“This is the first time I’ve seen one. In the south, we normally use horses.”

“That’s right. This is an animal called caruk. Horses are precious in the north, so we mainly use the tough caruk.”

The caruk started running. Their legs were short, but they moved quickly. The shaking was small compared to horses.

They went through the wilderness. The landscape didn’t change and the open wasteland continued. Occasionally, an oasis could be seen, but it was mainly a wilderness filled with red sand.

They ran for a while and arrived at the Kapur Tribe. A simple fence surrounded an oasis and there were tents inside. It was very different from the modern and medieval cities on the continent. Tiyo also had a worried expression. Tiyo was from Quantas, a developed city on the continent.

“We’ve arrived. Wait a minute.”

They waited on the outside without entering the village. One of the orcs went inside on the caruk.

“Hrmm.” Crockta looked at the orcs. They sat on the caruks with casual expressions, but a strange tension could be felt. Was it fear of him or something else? Suddenly, Crockta looked at Tiyo.

“Zzz...”

He was sleeping. He didn’t show any nerves as he slept on the Caruk. Tiyo covered the orc’s back that he was leaning against

with saliva, while the orc in front twisted his body with a worried expression. The orc wanted to shake Tiyo off but he endured it. Crockta started laughing.

“Are all orcs in the south strong like you?” The orc in front of Crockta asked. Crockta replied without having to think.

“Of course.”

The true strength of warriors didn't mean the strength of their body. It was their strength of mind. All of the orcs he met were strong.

“How great. So now people can come to the north freely?”

“It is still tough.”

According to the system, there were 10 years left until the forest would fully open. Until then, the wall of darkness would stop most of those who wanted to pass through.

The orc who entered the village soon reappeared. He beckoned towards the orcs on the caruks from the entrance of the village. The caruks raised their bodies. Crockta's body started bouncing again.

The caruks ran into the village.

“.....”

The tribe's orcs were watching them with hostile gazes. There was a large lot in the center of the village where a huge orc was sitting on a chair. It seemed he was showing off his authority by wearing skulls as decoration.

Behind him, numerous Kapur Tribe warriors stared at Crockta and Tiyo.

“I see Chief!”

The orcs quickly dismounted from the caruk and knelt. Crockta and Tiyo just watched them. The Kapur chief rose from his seat. He was a fearsome orc who was larger than usual. His greedy eyes moved over Crockta's greatsword and Tiyo's General.

Then he asked, “Did you come from the south?”

It was a voice that was as tough as iron. Crockta nodded.

“Yes. I am called Crockta. It is nice to see you. Stay alive.”

Crockta greeted politely.

The Kapur warriors behind the chief murmured at his answer. The Kapur chief's eyes narrowed. He stomped the ground.

Kuuong!

Everyone became silent. The Kapur chief laughed at Crockta and Tiyo and declared,

“Kneel.”

Chapter 73 – Northern Orcs (2)

“I refuse,” Crockta answered bluntly. There was no hesitation in the answer, which caused Tiyo to laugh.

The face of the Kapur chief reddened. Then he yelled in a threatening manner, “Kuwaaaaaaaaack!”

The Kapur Clan orcs trembled. The chief looked around with ferocious eyes. The tribe members avoided his gaze. He lifted the big axe that was leaning against the tribe chief’s chair.

“I am Kapur, the Kapur Tribe’s chief! This is your final warning. Kneel down!” He screamed with red eyes towards Crockta.

It felt like he was going to run out right now.

‘Inexperienced warriors reveal their emotions on their faces.’

The words that Hoyt told him in the past popped into his head. It was as he said. Now that the chief had been insulted in front of his tribe members, he needed to show off his power and regain his authority. It was as good as displaying his weaknesses.

It was a waste to even call him an inexperienced warrior. He was no different from the monsters that the orcs handled. Crockta felt ashamed as an orc.

He charged with his axe. The other orc was much larger so a shadow covered Crockta for a moment. However, Crockta remained still. He was grasping the movements of the opponent.

He had experienced a great number of fights in Elder Lord. The enemies he met weren't any weaker than orcs. Even if he just remembered the behemoth, how many times had he almost died under its terrible feet? Then he had fought with the great hunter Shakan.

An axe swung randomly wouldn't be able to harm him. The axe descended in a straight path. Crockta stepped back. Kapur used the recoil to swing the axe from the other side. At that moment, Crockta swung his greatsword.

Kakang!

The axe didn't break but Kapur's hand bounced back from the reaction. He stiffened from the pain. Crockta jumped up and kicked his face.

“Keuak!”

Kapur collapsed. He rolled on the ground before getting to his feet.

Then he looked around again with ferocious eyes. The tribesmen watching the fight avoided his gaze again. Crockta's eyes sunk. He was able to see how the orc called Kapur usually acted.

Respect could never be gained through force.

Crockta advanced. Kapur fell back until his heel touched the chief's chair. There was no room to back down. Kapur rushed again. He was still the chief of an orc tribe. He jumped towards Crockta with a fearsome momentum.

“Aaaack!”

He swung the axe down vertically. Crockta turned around and avoided the attack. Ogre Slayer gained some rotating power. Kapur was unable to escape and receive the greatsword with his body.

“Kaaack!”

He was cut from under to armpits to his hips. Blood poured out. Kapur lowered the axe and grabbed his wound. He leaned over and gasped, “T-This guy...!”

He swallowed back the pain and moved the axe to the hand of his good side, but slipped on all of the blood. Kapur fell and started stuttering. “T-This...”

Crockta held his knee to Kapur's temple. Kapur started screaming from shock. Crockta looked around. The Kapur tribesmen were watching with fearful eyes.

“Unbelievable...”

The bodies of the warriors waiting behind the chief flinched. They were conflicted about whether to run out or not. Crockta turned his head.

“Once again, I have no intention of fighting you.”

The stunned Kapur’s body started twitching. It seemed like he was about to recover his spirit. Crockta kicked his head. Relentless kicking! Kapur’s tusk was broken and he was stunned again.

Crockta looked down at the fallen Kapur. Then he gazed at the Kapur warriors avoided his eyes.

“Your words and deeds don’t match dot...” Tiyo said.

Crockta shrugged. Crockta pointed to the Kapur warriors who originally brought them here. They were looking at each other with amazement. “Aren’t you the ones who called us here as guests?”

“T-That...”

“I just wanted to rest and talk here.”

They became embarrassed at Crockta’s words. They hadn’t realized that he could overcome this tribe’s chief. “T-Then...”

Tiyo shouted at them, “I’m hungry dot!”

Then another Kapur warrior came out. It seemed like he was the leader when there was no chief. “I understand. Shelter and food. Follow me.”

Thus, Crockta and Tiyo became guests of the Kapur tribe after defeating their chief.

The Kapur Tribe had finally welcomed guests after a long time. Crockta didn’t know if they were welcoming or terrified, but he accepted it.

“Is Kapur okay?” Crockta asked.

Rakuta, the warrior treating Crockta, replied, “He is recovering.”

The warrior was calm, unlike the other orcs he met in the north. He served Crockta directly. It seemed like he wanted to hear about the south from Crockta. Crockta swallowed the meat. It was a little tough but it had the flavor of the south. It was the first time he tasted meat like this.

“You want to go to the Temple of the Fallen God?”

“That’s right.”

“I don’t know why you would want to go to those ruins but it won’t be easy.”

Crockta stared at him.

“That is the realm of humans and dark elves. You will be attacked.”

The relationship between species was bad on the continent where he lived, but they didn’t attack other species out of the blue. But the north was different. According to Rakuta, the different species clashed and fought with each other. There were even cases where the same species were divided in two.

“Can you explain about the North?”

“The North...”

Crockta felt his head hurt at the description.

This was the outskirts of the northern wilderness. If he went a little further up, the real orc area would appear.

Several tribes were gathered around the Great Clan’s chieftain. The tribes led by the clan chief were militant, going around butchering, plundering and slaughtering. They were always

hoping for war and provoking other species in the north.

The slavery that was forbidden on the continent was active here. The north was more narrow than the rest of the continent, but there were many conflicts with various species.

“I get it.”

Then Tiyo’s voice could be heard from outside the tent. “So I just lifted my gun and fired dot! Then the big monster started talking dot! I’m surprisedddd~ My ‘General’ fired relentlessly at his eyes and pabababat!”

“Wow.”

“Amazing!”

Due to being a small gnome and carrying a magic rifle from the continent, Tiyo attracted the attention of young orcs. Tiyo was telling them a story. Tiyo poked his head through the entrance of the tent.

“Crockta! Come out and tell the story! This is why I am a wonderful gnome!”

Crockta laughed.

At that moment, one orc went past Tiyo and entered the tent. He

nervously said to Rakuta, “Rakuta, there is trouble.”

Then he looked at Crockta. He was afraid of Crockta, who had knocked down their chief.

“What’s going on?”

“All of a sudden, a messenger has come from the great clan chief. Today...”

Rakuta frowned. Crockta didn’t know what he was talking about. Rakuta explained.

“Like I said, there is a great clan chief. Originally he wasn’t involved in this area, but the Kapur chief wanted to become a sub-tribe under his control. We recently sent a tribute and the clan chief said there would be an answer soon...”

He thought about something.

“Please stay here. Your friend as well. You should absolutely not leave this place.”

Then he left the tent. Tiyo entered the tent, lamenting, “Ah, I was interrupted at the important part dot!”

Crockta smiled and placed more meat in his mouth.

Hammerchwi looked around the Kapur tribe on a caruk.

It was a desolate land.

“Sending me to this place...”

He was an old orc warrior. He was a warrior who took down dark elves in his youth, but now his body wasn't the same. However, his hammer missed the battlefield. He still had enough strength to trample his enemies.

‘It can't be helped.’

The new clan chieftain didn't like him. It couldn't be helped. Young people always found the advice of the elderly uncomfortable. Especially someone holding power at a young age. So he kept sending Hammerchwi to different places.

He met with various tribe chiefs who wanted to go under the great clan chief, and now he came to this small tribe that was near the wall of darkness. But the atmosphere was weird. The tribe was strangely messy. There were blood stains in the central lot where people would gather. Hammerchwi got down from his caruk.

He discovered something on the ground. An orc's broken tusk.

“Hrmm...”

His eyes narrowed. Then he asked one of the Kapur tribesmen serving him.

“What happened?”

“Ah, nothing.”

However, there were signs of panic. Hammerchwi smiled.

“Where is the chief?”

“He should be coming soon.”

A large tribe warrior standing behind Hammerchwi opened his mouth.

“Don’t make Hammerchwi wait for any longer,” someone said in a desolate voice. The Kapur orcs froze.

Ten great tribe warriors were escorting Hammerchwi. They had steel weapons and high-quality armor that couldn’t be seen in the wilderness around here. They weren’t like the small tribe who couldn’t make weapons and had to rob other species.

“There is no need to threaten them. I have a lot of time,”

Hammerchwi scolded.

“I understand.” The warrior bowed his head.

Then Kapur hurriedly came out of his tent. He was a big orc that could match the size of the great clan chief. He was big even in comparison to the clan warriors. However, his movements were strange.

Hammerchwi narrowed his eyes. There were cloths wrapped around the orc’s body. They were soaked with blood. The swollen face wasn’t the end of it, though.

“.....”

The tusks protruding from his mouth were broken.

“How interesting,” Hammerchwi laughed.

Kapur approached and bowed his head. “You came a long way. I am Kapur.”

It was a totally different attitude from how he treated his tribesmen. Hammerchwi confirmed the bloodstains on Kapur’s side.

“What happened?”

“Nothing! Nothing happened.”

“No?”

Hammerchwi bent his knees and looked at the face of Kapur who was still bowing. He flinched.

“Tell me what happened.”

“Nothing happened...”

“Are you lying to me right now?”

“.....”

Kapur rolled his eyes. Then he said, “Actually, something did happen.”

“Describe it.”

“An orc suddenly came and threatened us. I fought him but he was holding a weird weapon and I couldn’t resist. He said he wanted to kill me and become the chief of this place.”

Hammerchwi touched his chin. “Hrmm...”

“He didn’t even care that the great clan chieftain is behind me.

Please defeat him!”

Hammerchwi nodded. He didn’t know the exact matter but there were two certain facts.

One. This chief lost to someone. Two. The orc was stronger than the chief.

“Interesting.” Hammerchwi stood up. It had been a tedious task but suddenly something different had happened. Hammerchwi said as he looked around the Kapur tribe. “So where is this orc?”

He glared fiercely at the Kapur tribe members. They pointed to a tent. Kapur spoke in an earnest tone to Hammerchwi. “That tent over there.”

Hammerchwi nodded.

“I will see him.”

He walked towards the tent. The inside of the tent wasn’t visible because the entrance was closed.

“Be careful! He is big, has a terrible belt and tattoos all over his body!”

A person who could knock out the over sized Kapur chief wasn’t normal.

Hammerchwi's mouth rose. Would this fearsome orc entertain him? Excitement at the battle in front of him filled his whole body. The orcs in the outskirts weren't properly trained but there were still those who showed a rough wildness. This guy was probably one of them.

He led the other clan warriors into the tent. Then Hammerchwi finally saw the opponent.

There.

“Who are you?” A cute little gnome cried out.

Chapter 74 – Great Clan (1)

Hammerchwi was stunned by the unexpected sight.

The gnome asked with a fierce expression, “I said, who are you? At least knock before opening the door dot!”

Hammerchwi didn’t know how to react to the little gnome. He was a veteran who destroyed his enemies, not an old man who dealt with children. Instead, a clan warrior standing behind him spoke, “If you don’t want to die, shut your mouth, kid.”

“What?” The gnome stepped forward. “Hey, just because you are big orcs doesn’t mean that...”

“I told you to shut your mouth, kid.”

Sparks flew as they locked gazes.

“I suppose I should make you come to your senses dot.”

“I should be the one saying that,” retorted the orc.

As they both growled at each other, the gnome prepared to point at the orc warrior with the rifle on his back. Then somebody sitting in a corner of the tent stood up. They hadn’t noticed him due to the gnome, but once he moved, a large bulk filled the tent. An orc with numerous tattoos and blood vessels showing on his

green skin.

Hammerchwi's eyes widened. There were still people who received such tattoos.

“What is this?”

Hammerchwi felt his heart beating with an unknown feeling as he stared into those calm eyes. This person wasn't normal. Hammerchwi's mouth unconsciously went up. “Are you the one who hurt the Kapur chief?”

“Yes,” he answered without hesitation.

“For what reason...?”

“Let's go out and talk.” The orc interrupted. The warriors behind him huffed but Hammerchwi didn't care.

“Understood.”

Orc warriors should face each other under the sun. If he truly wanted to know someone, he shouldn't accuse them in a tent.

“Step back now.”

Hammerchwi opened a path among the large clan warriors.

The orc and gnome left the tent. The orc's magnificent appearance was revealed. Despite being smaller than the Kapur chief, his tough muscles swelled throughout his body. A greatsword was smoothly carried on his back.

He was a man who had experienced many battles. His face was casual despite facing Hammerchwi and the great clan warriors. Hammerchwi stared into his eyes and asked.

“Now, I want to ask. The Kapur chief...”

“It is me.” He once again interrupted Hammerchwi, “I am the orc warrior, Crockta. Stay alive.”

Then he extended a fist towards Hammerchwi.

“.....!”

“You dare!” One of the clan warriors was offended by the action and raised his weapon. “This bastard! Talking nonsense to Hammerchwi!”

He was about to run out straight away. However, Hammerchwi restrained him.

“...Hammerchwi?”

Hammerchwi didn't answer. He was looking at the young orc in front of him with a strange expression. It was a disbelieving look. Hammerchwi burst out laughing, "Kuhahahahahat!"

His laughter resonated through the Kapur Tribe. The great clan warriors looked at him with confusion. Hammerchwi touched the warrior's shoulder and gestured for him to step back.

"Hahahahat! Yes, yes. I should." Hammerchwi took one step and struck his fist against the orc's and said, "I am Hammerchwi, the ambassador for the Great Clan Chief who leads the Great Clan, the one who conveys the words of the great chieftain! I am alive!"

It was a saying that a warrior should say to another warrior they encountered! It was a natural story. Orcs didn't change their attitude just because they had a higher status and led many subordinates. All orc warriors were the same. It was something that Hammerchwi had forgotten.

And that was to stay alive. How long had it been since he heard such an old-fashioned greeting?

The two orcs' eyes met. They bumped each other's fist.

"Now, I will ask again. Did you hurt the Kapur chief?"

"Yes."

"What were your intentions?"

“He attacked me first, so I needed to defend myself.”

“Hrmm.”

Look at this.

Hammerchwi glanced at the distant Kapur. He shook his head with a wronged expression.

Kapur was an orc who ruled over this wild region because he was larger and more powerful than the other orcs. Even though it was a land that contained nothing, there was no enemy in the area who could beat him. Once the proper equipment was worn, he could even fight one of the great clan warriors.

To make Kapur act so cowardly, how bad was this orc?

Hammerchwi said with a smile, “Kapur says that you attacked in a cowardly manner to become the chief here.”

Crockta grinned as he responde, “That is a lie.”

“Well, these are just words, so I don’t know who is right or wrong.” Hammerchwi stroked his chin like he was thinking. “Then let me see...I can’t tell who is right...unless...”

Then he laughed. It was a thrilled expression that didn’t fit the

wrinkled face. “Why don’t we settle this with a duel between orcs?”

He touched the large hammer on his back. Like his name, Hammerchwi was a warrior wielding a battle hammer.

“Kapur isn’t in a state to fight so I will be your opponent.”

It was far-fetched. Everyone knew that he just wanted a reason to compete. Crockta burst out laughing.

The warriors behind Hammerchwi stopped him. “That won’t work.”

“It is too much for Hammerchwi to come out.”

“Please.”

Hammerchwi frowned. “Are you disregarding me because I am old?”

“Absolutely not. How could we think that? But the great chief wouldn’t allow this.”

“You can keep it a secret from the great chief.”

“I can’t...”

“Aish.” Hammerchwi shrugged. “It will leak. Yes, you are more loyal to the great chief.”

“Hammerchwi!”

“It is a joke.”

Hammerchwi spoke to Crockta. “Unfortunately, it seems like I won’t be able to come out. These guys are like people minding a child. They are disregarding me because I am old.”

“I think it is more about respect than disregard.”

“Kulkulkul, that is nice to hear.” Hammerchwi grabbed the shoulder of the great clan warrior Jeulta standing behind him, “Instead, this guy will play. He is the best among them. Say hello, Jeulta.”

Jeulta had an unwilling expression but he obeyed Hammerchwi and greeted Crockta.. It was the very orc who first walked into the tent and started a battle of nerves with Tiyo.

“I am the Great Clan warrior, Jeulta.”

“I am Crockta.”

Hammerchwi clapped loudly. “Well, Crockta, do you have any

complaints?”

“It seems like there is no choice.” Crockta laughed bitterly as he watched the clan warriors staring at him from behind Hammerchwi.

Tiyo poked Crockta’s thigh. “Is this okay? That orc looks very tough dot.”

“Do you think I will lose, Tiyo?”

Tiyo shook his head. “No, won’t that face become uglier after being beaten by Crockta dot?”

Crockta laughed at his words. Hammerchwi was also smiling.

Jeulta’s mouth distorted. “You... it is your turn next, Kid.”

“Yes, Crockta will squash your face and I will roll it out again dot. Don’t worry, I’ll be sure to give you good slaps with my palms!”

Tiyo’s words caused the warriors to laugh. Jeulta shook his head with a frown and asked Crockta, “Does you friend always have no fear?”

“He is a feisty friend.”

Jeulta's weapons were twin axes. As he held the two axes, Crockta also pulled out Ogre Slayer from his back.

"And there is nothing to be scared about," Crockta said with a smile.

Jeulta laughed. "The same type of people will gather together. Okay."

Hammerchwi and the other tribe warriors retreated. A space for the two people was created. The Kapur Tribe also gathered to see the duel that was suddenly occurring. Kapur looked nervous. He had made up a cowardly lie. If this orc was acknowledged by the clan warriors, then his plight would fall even further. He was cheering for Jeulta.

Crockta and Jeulta got into their stances. Then the two of them met.

The sound of metal clashing rang through the Kapur tribe. The sound of fighting soon became intense.

Kakakang!

The weapons of the two people clashed against each other. Sparks flew out. Crockta wielded his greatsword. Jeulta crossed both axes and blocked it. It became a struggle of power between them. The veins on both people's faces were bulging.

“What...strength...!”

Normally, Jeulta would've used the advantage of his twin weapons to attack the enemy's gaps, but the attacks of this strange orc were different. Every strike made him feel like his body was going to be cut in half.

Furthermore, every time their eyes met during the fight, the orc would grin.

Jeulta's pride was scratched, causing him to scream, “Kuaaaaaaack!”

It was a frightening roar. It was the battle cry of the warrior Jeulta, who enemies feared on the battlefield! Jeulta gathered his strength and aimed at Crockta. But it was blocked by the greatsword.

“Kuoh!”

The battle continued but Jeulta started to be suppressed. He noticed that the opponent wasn't ending the fight in order to gauge his power. He wanted to know the power of the warriors from the Great Clan. The opponent had that much room to think.

“You dare!”

Jeulta was furious. He started an attack that ignored his body. One of them, either himself or his opponent, would be injured. He

tried to make a decisive move. And it was his two axes that were blown away.

“.....”

The end of the greatsword was touching his neck. It was his defeat.

The Kapur Clan orcs watching the duel clapped.

“It was a great match.”

“Breathtaking.”

However, the faces of Hammerchwi and the clan warriors were frozen.

They understood that it wasn't a breathtaking match. Crockta had been playing with Jeulta. He could've finished it at any time, but he was checking Jeulta's skill, then he lightly restrained Jeulta's last attack.

Jeulta was the leader of the warriors who followed Hammerchwi and a fierce powerhouse. In other words, the young orc's skills were close to the great warrior Hammerchwi.

Clap. Clap. Clap.

Hammerchwi started to clap.

“Great.” Hammerchwi moved forward and patted Jeulta on the head, gesturing for him to return. “It is a fighting style that is hard to see in orcs these days. Sophisticated techniques. Who did you learn it from?”

“A great warrior.”

“A great warrior...” Hammerchwi laughed once again.

He liked it.

He thought inwardly. It was an age where no one called themselves a great warrior. Warriors were strong, so killing was considered more of a virtue. This land of orcs was trying to become strong rather than great.

Where had this warrior come from?

“I’m curious. Where do you come from?”

Crockta replied.

A feast was held in the Kapur tribe. It was to entertain

Hammerchwi and the warriors from the Great Clan.

A feast was now set up in the vacant lot where the fighting had taken place. To this end, a few caruks died. The orcs sat around a large fire, eating meat and drinking alcohol.

“It is a really amazing place.”

Hammerchwi said to Crockta who was sitting opposite him.

At first, he thought it was a joke when Crockta said he came from the south. But he started to believe after more facts were shared. A land where orcs still followed the laws of the warriors. Different species lived together without any fighting. It felt like paradise.

“You want to find the Temple of the Fallen God.”

“Yes.”

“Um...”

Hammerchwi touched his chin. That wasn't in an orc area. There would be fights if he wanted to go there. But there was no need to avoid conflicts.

“Crockta.”

“Yes.”

“Will you become a warrior of the Great Clan?”

The other warriors stopped and listened to the proposal.

Crockta had enough skills to be qualified. No, it was more than that. Given the tendency of the great chief to treat those who were stronger well, Crockta could have a position higher than a general warrior. It would also be nice to have another strong warrior become a colleague.

Despite the fight before, their enemies weren't orcs but the wicked humans and dark elves.

“If you become a warrior of the Great Clan, you can go to the Temple of the Fallen God.”

“Tell me how.”

Hammerchwi laughed while touching his hammer. “War.”

He was still a militant orc of the north. “After wiping out all the dark elves, you can easily go to the Temple of the Fallen God.”

At the end of Hammerchwi's words, the clan warriors raised their cups.

“To the Great Clan!”

“To orcs!”

Then they simultaneously drank from their cups. The Kapur orcs also drank the alcohol.

“The Great Clan will soon go to war. This is the decision of the great chief. Crockta, you can trample them more easily if you go with us. You can go anywhere you want in the north.”

His voice was serious. He truly hoped for Crockta to join them. Crockta was a great fighter. He was convinced that Crockta would become more than a general warrior. And maybe... He could become an even greater presence than that.

“I will think about it. I am not alone.”

Crockta pointed somewhere. A small gnome was drunkenly firing magic bullets into the air. The young orcs around him cheered. He was always a lively person.

Tiyo started to sing.

“We protect our beautiful Quantess~ Gnome Garrison~ live with today ! Bathe in the blood of creatures ~!”

The song of the Quantess' Gnome Garrison. The young orcs

awkwardly sang along. Tiyo fired colourful magic power into the air once again.

“Bah!” The warrior Jeulta scoffed and stood up. He pointed to Tiyo and declared. “The song of a kid is terrible!”

“What are you saying dot!”

“Listen carefully, Kid! A real man’s song is like this!” Then he started to shout. “Look at the orcs~! Pillage ! Finish up! Spread your two legs~!”

It was the song of the northern orcs. It was a tough but powerful sound!

However, it was lacking. It was ambitious but too insufficient from Crockta’s viewpoint.

“Hah...”

These guys in the north didn’t know how to be real warriors. Crockta felt a strong sense of purpose and stood up. It was to spread the voice of a real warrior! He would show this desolate land what a real warrior’s song was!

He used Army Crushing Roar to spread his lyrics further.

“We are orcs! The mighty orcs————!”

Chapter 75 – Great Clan (2)

“It is okay?” Crockta asked.

Rakuta, the warrior from the Kapur Tribe nodded. Crockta and Tiyo’s destination was the Forest of the Fallen God. They couldn’t stay here at the Kapur Tribe, as its chief was still the big orc, Kapur.

“I will defend this tribe with my own power.”

Everyone now knew that Kapur was an oppressive chief who would trouble the tribe. Despite this, they couldn’t deny that Kapur was the chief of this place because he was the strongest. The orc, Rakuta, endured all of that.

“You might be able to kill Kapur. But it isn’t true freedom.”

Crockta nodded. It would just be a half-ending for the tribe if Crockta defeated Kapur for them.

The drunk Rakuta had confessed to Crockta at the end of the feast, saying that he would become stronger and beat Kapur, thus making the Kapur tribe more prosperous. That was his goal.

Crockta felt that it was both commendable and sad.

Crockta had received the teachings of great people since his

apprenticeship. Lenox, Hoyt, Tashaquil, Grant, Gulda, and Antuak. All of them were like lanterns that lit his way forth. The orcs on the continent kept their great spirit without losing the pride of a warrior.

But this place, the North, was different. It was a desolate landscape.

Crockta wanted to help out a little bit. But what could he do?

“Crockta, how can I become as strong as you?” Rakuta asked.

Crockta laughed. There were times when he felt like the orc wielding his weapon in Orcrox’s training grounds. At that time, he was just an apprentice warrior who was criticized by Lenox.

Now someone was asking him how to become strong. What made him strong?

He thought about it. From the first mutant hunting at Orcrox to the recent behemoth hunting. There were many fights, and in every struggle, there was always a moment when he wanted to give up.

But he endured it. Sometimes alone, and sometimes with colleagues.

Crockta replied, “My indomitable will!”

That was the word. All of the great warriors he knew had such spirit. They gave all of themselves without giving up.

“Indomitable will.” Rakuta nodded, a smile blooming on his face. It seemed like he had wanted someone to say something like that to him.

“Thank you.”

“Don’t doubt yourself.”

Crockta extended his fist. Rakuta was unfamiliar with the old greeting, but he still laughed and bumped fists with Crockta.

Thus, Crockta left the Kapur Tribe with Hammerchwi and the warriors of the Great Clan. Kapur said goodbye to Hammerchwi with a bow. There was a mixture of fear and hostility in his eyes when he looked at Crockta.

They headed North. Hammerchwi was returning to the Great Clan while Crockta headed to the dark elves area where the Temple of the Fallen God was located. The proposal to join the clan was put on hold. He needed to know more about the situation in the North.

“Where is my father...?” Tiyo muttered, not particularly in a sad tone. He seemed more concerned with exploring the North than about finding his father.

Tiyo hummed and spoke again, “He is probably alive and well somewhere dot.”

Jeulta interrupted, “Gnomes often appear in the mountain ranges near the human areas, so he might be somewhere there.”

“Hoh... are you acting friendly now?”

“I-I’m just saying. Little guy!”

“Don’t call me that dot.”

“Bah.”

Jeulta moved ahead on his caruk. Tiyo smiled.

The two of them seemed to enjoy arguing.

They rode the caruks through the wilderness. The weather began to change as soon as they got away from the wall of darkness separating the continent and the North. Gradually, plants grew and a green landscape appeared.

“This area isn’t an area, but a deserted land.” Hammerchwi explained, “It is a place where those who don’t belong to their own species live.”

“Orcs and dark elves?”

“That’s right. There are also gnomes and humans.”

It was like the fugitives who built Anail.

Jeremy suddenly popped into his head. Was he still under Derek or had he been attacked by Derek? He wasn’t a person for Crockta to worry about. He was a man who could pioneer his own destiny.

Suddenly, the caruks stopped.

“Gruruk!”

Crockta patted the caruk’s head. Crockta and Tiyo had received their own caruks. Unlike their appearance, it was easy for beginners to ride them.

“There’s someone ahead!” The clan warrior in the lead shouted.

A group was standing in the distance. Hammerchwi nodded and the warrior kicked his caruk.

“I will check!” He moved quickly and soon approached the unknown group.

“Is it okay for him to go alone?”

“There is no one who would mess with warriors of the Great Clan. Attacking us means becoming the enemy of the Great Clan.” Hammerchwi explained. He was intentionally trying to entice Crockta by emphasizing the greatness of the clan. Crockta grinned.

“Huhut! Look at this! My sense of balance!”

Tiyo was bored while on standby so he climbed onto the caruk’s horns and started balancing. The caruk seemed to like Tiyo as it raised its head. Tiyo started his signature colorful magic power show.

“This is a gnome dot!”

Jeulta felt an unknown motivation as he watched. “I-I can do it as well!”

Jeulta tried to balance on the caruk’s head but it was unable to withstand his weight and threw him off. Jeulta fell to the ground.

Tiyo looked down on him from the caruk’s horns. “Hahahahat! If you were trying to make me laugh then it is a success dot!”

“Ugh...”

The other clan warriors shook their heads.

“Hrmm...” Hammerchwi was watching the scene when he suddenly moved.

Crockta stopped him and said, “Don’t follow in their footsteps.”

“Hum hum. I was just shaking.” But he kept on glancing at his caruk’s horns. It seemed like he truly wanted to try.

Soon the clan warrior came back. He spoke to Hammerchwi, “All of them are slave traders.”

“I see.”

Hammerchwi’s eyes slightly distorted.

Crockta spoke up. “Did you say slave traders?”

“.....”

On the continent, slave trading was taboo. There was the incident in Arnin but those were crimes that happened in the shadows. If slave trading was discovered then all species and cities would become hostile to them, forming alliances to repel the slave trading.

But the North was different.

“Just go.” Hammerchwi directed his caruk. Crockta looked at his back with disappointment. He thought that Hammerchwi was different from the Northern orcs, but he still followed the great chieftain.

“Bah, slavery, how barbaric dot!” Tiyo cried out from where he was listening.

The eyebrows of the warriors twitched. Hammerchwi raised his hand and calmed the warriors. The clan warriors scowled at Tiyo before driving their caruks forward.

Tiyo looked at Crockta with an expression showing he didn't like it. Crockta nodded towards Tiyo.

They headed North and encountered the slave traders.

“Hello. Great Warrior Hammerchwi!”

The slave traders bowed as they already knew who Hammerchwi was after meeting the warrior. The slave traders said to the orcs, “Please tell us if you need anything. The warriors of the Great Clan can do anything.”

“No.”

Crockta's face hardened as he followed from behind Hammerchwi.

These slave merchants weren't just carrying slaves. They were directly hunting slaves.

A little further North, a burning village could be seen. Dark smoke was rising from it. The screams of men and women could be heard as they were captured by armed orcs and handed over to the slave traders here. They were then imprisoned in carriages driven by the slave traders.

The slaves cried out.

“This...!” Tiyo was about to cry out angrily when,

“——!”

A huge cry ripped through the air. The caruks were surprised. The warriors blocked their ears in pain. The slave traders were bleeding from the ears.

Hammerchwi looked at the source of the sound. It was Crockta.

“Do you know the meaning of the word I just shouted?”

Hammerchwi's face stiffened. He knew. Countless orcs had already forgotten but the old orc warriors still remembered. At one time, this cry was heard everyone among the orcs. But times had changed. Now it sounded so strange to him. It was a cloudy

memory from the distant past.

“...I know.”

“Then you know what I will do now.”

Hammerchwi sighed, “Is that really necessary?”

“I want to ask you that.” Crockta reached out and pointed to one place.

Miserable slaves were being dragged here. And those slaves...

They were orcs.

“Is that your path?”

Hammerchwi shook his head. He also wasn't satisfied with the slaves. However, it couldn't be helped. Slavery was one of the means of war that the great chieftain proclaimed.

“I don't like it. However, this is the great chief's law so we have to follow it. This is none of your business.”

Crockta laughed. Now he no longer felt respect towards Hammerchwi.

“Great Warrior Hammerchwi. You don’t deserve the name of a warrior.”

“What?” Hammerchwi’s face distorted. The clan warriors grabbed their weapons. “You are overdoing it! That is the law here, Crockta!”

Hammerchwi picked up his hammer. “You come from the peaceful south and don’t know anything. The North is a land where you will die if you can’t kill your opponents. Weak people are weeded out.”

Hammerchwi got down from his caruk and spat at Crockta. “Don’t force the laws of a weak land towards us.”

Crockta burst out laughing. He also got down from his caruk.

“How strange.” Crockta kept laughing. “You are the mistaken ones. It isn’t weak to do the right thing. You are mistaken if you think that unhesitatingly wielding your weapons towards a weaker opponent is called strength. The truth is, it is quite the opposite.”

“.....”

“I assure you, there are no orcs weaker than you on the continent.”

‘Ogre Slayer’ shone in the sun. Now all the clan warriors, including Hammerchwi, were pointing their weapons at Crockta.

Crockta actually felt more comfortable. He was lucky to study the laws of the warriors until Lenox. Doing what he believed freely, without disturbing anyone was the orc warrior that he knew. They weren't afraid of being called cowardly or afraid to fight.

Crockta smiled and said. "Now, let me ask you one thing. Hammerchwi, are you living right now?"

"Get rid of those impractical old stories!"

Crockta once again smiled. He was a human who became an orc that practiced this old-fashioned nonsense. The warriors who gave their lives for him were his teachers.

These orcs here were so small compared to them. How poor was their pride that they would mindlessly follow the laws of the clan chief, without caring about right or wrong?

Tiyo said as he confronted them, "Crockta, let's finish this quickly. I'll give you 10 minutes dot."

It was a provocation that Crockta alone could deal with all of them! The clan warriors stepped forward in unison. Crockta raised Ogre Slayer and declared.

"Five minutes is enough."

Steam rose from his greatsword.

“Heok, heok... Everybody okay...?” Hammerchwi muttered.

The warriors of the Great Clan had collapsed on the red ground.

“Kuoooooh...” Jeulta barely managed to raise his body. His thigh was half cut off. He tried to reach out for Hammerchwi, only to fall down again with a moan.

“Crockta...” Hammerchwi muttered. The battle hammer he cared for had been completely shattered. It was a rare steel weapon that he received directly from the great chieftain. But it was completely broken by Crockta’s swordsmanship. He was much better than Hammerchwi expected.

The difference in skills was evident.

“Kuock...you’re okay.”

Hammerchwi checked the status of the warriors. Crockta hadn’t killed any of the warriors. He had left with his gnome friend without speaking any words of mercy.

“Shit...”

However, his mercy didn't extend to the slave traders. All the slave traders had one arm cut off. They had died from the shock. He released the captured slaves along with the gnome.

‘Hammerchwi, are you living right now?’

Crockta's voice popped into his head. The question of being alive was an old orc greeting that no one remembered these days. Hammerchwi was aware of the implication of it.

Yes, he was aware.

“Maybe...”

He was badly defeated but he somehow didn't feel bad. He was an old warrior, a veteran with few days left to live. He thought it would be lucky if he survived until the end of the year. However, a warrior who could change the North had emerged.

Could it be that the change would begin today?

He wondered if he would spend the remaining days of his life watching the North change. The great chieftain was obviously strong. Hammerchwi had never seen such an overwhelming force. Even Crockta, who defeated all of them, couldn't be compared to the great chieftain.

But.

‘Hammerchwi. Remember this.’

When Hammerchwi had been young, his grandfather was an old veteran. One day, his grandfather had called the young Hammerchwi and said.

‘Orcs who remember this can be great. But an orc who forgets it will wander for life. So be sure to engrave it in you.’

Then he forgot it. He wasn’t the only one. No one remembered it in the North. That word had died. But today, he heard it spoken in his ears. The roar that shook the ground brought back the childhood memory.

“Was I wandering...?”

Hammerchwi sighed. The warriors had regained their spirits and were standing up. Hammerchwi watched them and spoke ‘it’ out loud.

It somehow echoed in his heart.

“Bul’tar.”

Chapter 76 – Orcheim (1)

“Thank you,” Caburak said. He was one of the slaves rescued by Crockta and Tiyo. His pronunciation was strange due to his broken teeth, but he laughed like he didn’t care. “I am alive thanks to people like you.”

He was riding behind Tiyo on the caruk. Tiyo complained, “Be careful, you spit every time you speak dot!”

Caburak laughed, “Sorry, kyulkyulkyul! I heard that you are going North, but what is your specific destination?”

“We are heading for the Temple of the Fallen God.”

“The Fallen God...?”

“Ask Crockta.”

Tiyo gestured towards Crockta. Crockta looked at Caburak and nodded. “Yes.”

“What brings you there?”

“There is something I want to find out personally.”

Crockta looked at the distant horizon. If they continued this way, they would arrive at a village of dark elves. Although they were

hostile towards orcs, he needed to find a way to reach the Temple of the Fallen God.

Caburak was heading North to his hometown, so they would travel together to the dark elf village before splitting up.

“Hrmm... Fallen God...” Caburak muttered.

Crockta laughed and asked, “Do you know about the Temple of the Fallen God?”

“From what I know...hrmm...” Caburak looked up at the sky in an exaggerated manner and touched his chin. “If I were you... hrmm...”

“What is it?”

“Crockta... I want to ask you. Why did you save me?”

“Does there need to be a reason?”

“It is like... a personal belief? Or...”

Crockta laughed and replied, “I am a warrior.”

“Right, a warrior. The ones who captured us were also warriors.”

“A real warrior.”

“A real warrior?”

“On the southern continent, you can’t become a warrior just because you are strong. Fighters aren’t warriors.”

Crockta pointed to his tattoos. He had received the Tattoos of Honor when he first became a warrior, and they were now upgraded to Tattoos of Honor and Fighting Spirit.

These were granted by the shaman who controlled the warrior’s ritual, and evolved with the warrior’s actions and beliefs. Unlike Crockta, there were those who had Tattoos of Power or Tattoos of Revenge.

Obviously, those who didn’t qualify as warriors couldn’t get the tattoos. No matter how much power the shaman put in, the tattoos wouldn’t appear. On the continent, any orcs with tattoos would be a warrior.

Crockta continued, “If I had to give you a reason, I would say one thing.”

“What is it?”

“The warrior’s laws, the fifth one.”

“Umm?”

“A warrior doesn’t shame the gods!” Crockta grinned. “Turning others into slaves is a shameful thing.”

Orcs rarely mentioned the gods. The first he heard of it was when Lenox taught him the warrior’s laws in the Hall of Fame. Orcs didn’t have statues towards gods like the Goddess of Benevolence or God of Light like the other species. There were no temples, festivals or a religion that borrowed the divine power of the god.

Nevertheless, the warrior’s laws were an oath to the gods. So Crockta guessed that it was like a belief in his heart.

“The gods!” Caburak’s eyes widened. “Gods!”

As if he was listening to the echo, he repeated it once and closed his eyes. Then he laughed loudly, “Kyulkyulkyulkyul! A warrior talking about the gods!”

Caburak tapped on the shoulder of Tiyo who was steering the caruk.

“Hey, Tiyo! The orcs in the south are like this! Kyulkyulkyul!”

“It hurts dot, hit me gently!”

“Sorry, kyulkyulkyulkyul!” Caburak laughed as the caruk cried

out. Caburak felt sorry towards the caruk and patted its ass. “You want to go to the Temple of the Fallen God?”

“Yes.”

“If you aren’t in a hurry then you should follow me!”

Caburak pointed to the mountain range that had started to appear on the Northeast horizon. “My beautiful home is located in the Luklan Mountains!”

Tiyo’s eyes shone at the prospect of a new destination. Tiyo wanted to explore everywhere in the North. “Hoh, it sounds magical!”

“Kyulkyul, there are also gnomes living nearby.”

“Hoh, the Northern gnomes, it must be an impressive place!”

Tiyo glanced at Crockta. His eyes expressed a desire to go there. Crockta shrugged.

“There is no reason not to. But why are you inviting us all of a sudden?”

Caburak pointed to Crockta. “You mentioned the gods!”

“Gods?”

“The Northern orcs that remember the gods have disappeared! Everybody has forgotten! Then you appeared and mentioned the gods, so I should invite you!” Caburak shouted with a shine in his eyes.

“To the Holy Land of the orcs, Orcheim!”

They started to climb the mountain. The caruks were able to climb the mountain due to their low center of gravity, but they were breathing hard after a short period of time. The group decided to take a break.

Until recently, they had run through the wilderness and now they were climbing a mountain. The Northern terrain was really fickle.

Crockta looked at Caburak.

At first, he was an orc captured by the slave merchants. After seeing Crockta defeat Hammerchwi, the clan warriors, and the slave traders, Caburak asked if he could join them on their way. Others were thankful to Crockta but they also felt fear. Caburak talked intimately with Crockta, the warrior who defeated the Great Clan warriors, without any fear.

It wasn't like Caburak had no idea what was going on. Caburak just had a strange optimism that couldn't be understood. He wasn't broken despite being a slave.

"I'm glad to be going back home!" He smiled at Crockta.

Tiyo asked from where he was lying on top of the caruk, "Hey! Caburak! Where are the gnomes dot?"

"It is near Orcheim so you can stop by there, kyulkyul."

"I wonder what the Northern gnomes will look like!" Then Tiyo pointed to Crockta. "The Northern orcs are just strange Crockta! The gnomes will be different dot! Hahahahat!"

"Kuoong."

"Oh Caburak, I didn't mean you dot! Kikik!"

"You're not wrong. This gnome friend talks without any hesitation! Kyulkyulkyul!"

Their laughs echoed on the mountain. Then soon rose from their seat.

"If we go a little future then it will appear."

They dragged the caruks up the mountain. The mountain gradually became rougher. Caburak wasn't in a good state so he kept stumbling or falling on the steep path. Crockta and Tiyo helped him.

“Kyulkyulkyul! Thank you!”

They climbed the mountain and reached a ridge.

“It is over there.” Caburak pointed down the mountain.

It was a wonderful scenery. There were no other mountains in the vicinity and the horizon was clear. The Northern landscape was beautifully spread below them, from the wasteland where they walked to plains and forests.

“Beautiful,” admired Crockta.

“This is exciting, kyulkyulkyul!”

The moment he burst out laughing. An arrow flew past the face of the smiling Caburak.

Susuk!

“.....!”

His cheek was sliced and there was a thin line of blood.

“Huh...?”

Caburak frowned as he touched his wound. Crockta quickly grabbed his arm and pulled him down.

“The enemy.”

“Where dot?”

Tiyo immediately pointed General in the direction that the arrow came from. It was from the ridge above them. Crockta stared at the other side. The bushes faintly shook. An arrow flew once again.

Crockta moved Ogre Slayer and blocked the arrow. The arrow fell to the ground after hitting the greatsword. The greatsword shook from the shock. Caburak picked up the arrow from where he was lying down.

“Dark... dark elf arrows...”

“Dark elves.”

Crockta had seen some dark elves on the continent. Unlike elves, dark elves had dark hair and tanned skin. Their physical abilities were better than general elves. Indeed, the arrows had power.

“Where are they?”

Tiyo shouted as he aimed General. Colorful magic bullets shot into the forest. The bushes exploded from the energy released. At that moment, there was a low scream. Tiyo shouted again.

“If you don’t want me to become even angrier, then reveal your identity at once!”

The bushes shook and the voice of a dark elf was heard. It was the voice of a woman. “Are you the dogs of the Great Clan?”

“What are you saying dot! We have nothing to do with them!”

The dark elf hiding in the bushes became silent before speaking again. “Then who are you?”

“Show yourself first!”

“...I am Yanura, a ranger of Dejame.”

She looked at Crockta, Tiyo and Caburak on the slopes. Caburak nodded. He rose from his spot.

“I am Caburak and I’m returning to Orcheim!”

“Orcheim?”

Then a dark elf rose from the bushes. With black hair and dark skin, she was a beautiful woman. She carried a heavy bow that looked much bigger than her body.

“What is an orc from Orcheim doing here?”

“I am returning to Orcheim after a trip, but why is a dark elf of Dejame here?”

“A trip... that’s right. You probably don’t know yet.” She nodded. “Things have changed while you were away. Orcheim and Dejame are now allied together to guard this area.”

“From what?”

She frowned as she looked at Tiyo. Then Tiyo stiffened at her next words.

“It is due to the wicked gnomes.”

They headed to Orcheim with Yanura.

During the trip, they could hear her explanation.

There were orcs, dark elves and gnomes living in their respective areas in the Luklan Mountains. Unlike the orcs and dark elves who fought outside, they enjoyed a self-sufficient and peaceful life. But the gnomes broke this balance.

They betrayed both species and joined with the Great Clan.

After the gnomes leaked the circumstances and security of this place, orcs from the Great Clan came to the Luklan Mountains and started to plunder and slaughter the people. The gnomes benefited from attacking the other species with the orcs.

There was a secret contract, so the conditions for the gnome must involve the Luklan Mountains.

Unlike the other species in the North, the gnomes had no independent armies. There were just small communities scattered around. So the gnomes of the Luklan Mountains were trying to build their own territory here.

Tiyo was devastated by the words.

“T-The Northern gnomes...”

“Kulkul, the Northern gnomes are also strange.”

Crockta teased him. Tiyo dropped his head with a grouchy expression. He was sorry.

Yanura looked towards Crockta and said, “I want to apologize for attacking you. I’ll escort you to Orcheim. That way, you won’t be misunderstood.”

She was subtly looking Crockta up and down. An orc from the south. He felt different from the orcs here. His body was covered with tattoos and such a huge sword was rare. She instinctively felt that Crockta was strong.

It would be great if he helped out.

“Why are going to Orcheim?” asked Yanura.

Crockta nodded towards Caburak and answered, “He said that Orcheim is the orc’s Holy Land. I was curious, so I decided to stop by.”

“Holy Land?”

She looked at him like she didn’t know it.

As they continued walking, orcs started to be seen. Orcheim was located flat on the mountainside after crossing over the Luklan Mountains. It wasn’t a developed place but it was a well-maintained village. Orcs were returning from their hunting while carrying a big wild boar. The gazes of the orcs gathered as a group containing a dark elf, gnome and orcs appeared.

Caburak took the lead. He made a regal gesture.

“I’m back! Orcheim!” shouted the freed slave. The orcs looked puzzled but they soon shouted his name.

“Caburak!”

“Caburak has returned!”

“Caburak?”

Crockta and Tiyo exchanged glances. They thought he was a good and frivolous orc, but was he actually a great orc?

“Wait a minute, Caburak?”

Yanura looked like she was reminded of something. Then she spoke in a trembling voice. “The son of the Orcheim Chief who disappeared, the genius orc shaman Caburak?”

Crockta and Tiyo’s eyes widened. They looked at Caburak. Caburak was spreading both arms wide open. His hands glowed white with his magic power. He was using an unknown magic.

“I, Caburak have returned!”

Pink petals started to appear in the arm in accordance with his

strength. The petals blew in the breeze as Caburak laughed heartily.

Chapter 77 – Orcheim (2)

Once he heard about Caburak's return, Caburak's father and the Orcheim chief Gorit came running. He was a sturdy orc carrying a huge battle axe.

Caburak was still laughing while surrounded by pink flower petals.

The eyes of the two orcs met. It was a welcome reunion after a long time. There were all sorts of emotions in Caburak and Gorit's eyes.

“Father!”

Gorit was also thrilled. The son he hadn't seen for a long time had returned!

Crockta and Tiyo, who accompanied Caburak for a while, felt warm in their hearts as they watched the reunion. They quietly slipped back. Caburak and Gorit walked towards each other like they were going to hug passionately.

The petals created by Caburak's magic streamed through the air. And...

Peeok!

“Huuk!”

Gorit grabbed Caburak’s collar and launched him into the air.

“F-Father?”

“This guy disappeared without a word and now you are back?” It was a serious punch. “And what about the Constellation Staff?”

“I-It was destroyed, Father...”

“You...!”

Gorit tried to hit his son again, but the orcs around him stopped it. It wasn’t easy to stop the big Gorit, so many orcs had to hold onto him tightly. Gorit kept yelling wildly.

“Villagers! Listen to me! This son of mine suddenly disappeared with the treasure of my house, only to reappear and say that it is broken! Villagers, isn’t this nonsense..!”

“If you hit him anymore then he might die.”

Caburak muttered, “My life has been saved three times...”

“I’ve lost my patience a long time ago! Now I will kill you!”

“Uhuh!”

Crockta and Tiyo watched the disturbance from the corner.

“Cough.”

“It must hurt dot...”

They were the guests but they didn't receive any attention because of Caburak. No, if it was known that they were Caburak's guests, Gorit might be furious at them as well.

Crockta asked the dark elf Yanura standing next to him. “What happened?”

“I don't know. Gorit had a son that was a brilliant shaman...then I heard that he disappeared one day with the artifact of his house.”

One of the orc warriors in the village found them and sought their understanding. “It looks like you are friends of Caburak so I'm sorry. It is because Gorit is hot-tempered. It might be dangerous now, but he will welcome you later.”

“Thank you.”

“My name is Marak. It is a pleasure.”

“Crockta. Stay alive,” greeted Crockta.

“Hoh. I didn’t know I would hear that from an outsider. Stay alive!”

He smiled and replied. Crockta’s eyes widened. There weren’t many orcs who knew this greeting in the north, and the orc warrior even extended his fist towards Crockta. Crockta bumped it with a sincere heart.

Marak laughed again. “It looks like you’re not an orc of the Great Clan!”

In the end, Caburak used this as an opportunity to escape from Gorit. He opened his mouth, “Now, now. Crockta isn’t from the Great Clan. Rather, he defeated people from the Great Clan and saved me. It was a big deal!”

The orcs’ eyes opened. “Hoh, the warriors from the Great Clan.”

“It wasn’t just one but multiple warriors!”

“You must be a great warrior.”

Gorit discovered Crockta, Tiyo, and Yanura.

Gorit swallowed down his anger and approached Caburak. Caburak looked into his eyes. Caburak flinched as Gorit reached

out, but Gorit just placed a hand on his head. Caburak looked like a little kid.

Caburak spoke with narrowed eyes. “These are my guests.”

Crockta greeted politely, “We came here after receiving Caburak’s invitation. I am the orc warrior Crockta. Stay alive.”

“Hoh.”

Gorit looked Crockta up and down. “Are your parents from Orcheim?”

“No.”

“I’ve never seen anyone outside of Orcheim say this greeting. Are you really not from here?”

Crockta laughed bitterly.

Then Caburak said, “Listen to my story! I traveled a long way... but...that...”

Caburak’s voice gradually trailed off at Gorit’s stare. He avoided eye contact. Gorit kept staring at Caburak and nodded.

“I understand but you’ll have to explain it properly. We are being

rude to the guests. Follow me.”

They said farewell to Yanura who was continuing her mission, then Crockta and Tiyo were guided to Gorit’s house. As the chief, Gorit’s house was a large log cabin. It was built up so that there was a second floor. Crockta and Tiyo were taken to a guest room.

They felt the accumulated fatigue as they set down their belongings. Crockta sat on the floor with Ogre Slayer, a weapon he always carried with him. He leaned back against the wall and a sound came out.

“Ohu...”

“.....”

From then on, Tiyo stayed quiet. He was thinking about something with a sullen expression.

It seemed like he was still shocked by Yanura’s words. Tiyo was proud of gnomes. He firmly believed that gnomes were the wisest and most rational species. The magic engineering developed by the gnomes could be called the essence of civilization.

“Are you okay?”

“I’m fine dot...” There was no strength in his voice.

“You don’t know the situation, so don’t become too frustrated yet.”

“I don’t need to hear the situation... gnomes should absolutely never hold hands with those selling slaves dot...”

Crockta laughed, “So it seems like both you and I will need to hunt our own species.”

“That’s right dot...”

“You should sound more assertive when saying this.”

Tiyo smiled as he got up. “Thank you Crockta. But please don’t worry. I was only thinking for a moment dot.”

“About what?”

“How to slay those guys!”

Crockta nodded. Problems of the heart could only be solved by oneself. Tiyo would soon return to the Tiyo that Crockta knew.

“I’m going dot! Ohhhhhhhh!”

It seemed like he had already returned.

Then the door opened and Gorit appeared. He stared down at Crockta and Tiyo. The duo became nervous due to his fierce eyes.

“Let’s go.”

He spoke curtly, “Go where?”

“Where?” Gorit cried out in a large voice. “Isn’t a bath necessary for men to know each other? To the hot springs!”

The fatigue was resolved after soaking in the hot water.

“Ohhhh, good dot...”

“The best,” muttered the duo.

Gorit was sitting on the other side. The strength of his body was further emphasized by the hot spring. Despite his age, his chest muscles were bulging. Gorit scanned Crockta with a similar expression. His body was muscular and covered with tattoos. The flesh tempered from wielding his greatsword was magnificent.

“Hrmm.”

Crockta moved his gaze towards Caburak. He was a small orc. If

it wasn't for his skin color, it wouldn't be strange for Caburak to be mistaken as a human. Caburak dropped his eyes at the gaze that seemed to rebuke his lack of a muscular body.

“It has been a long time since I've come to the hot spring to relieve fatigue dot! Thank you Gorit! Men need to bathe together!”

The most surprising one was Tiyo. He had the face of a cute gnome but his muscles were like Bruce Lee. It felt like the face of a bird being placed on a tiger.

“Huhut!”

A six pack appeared on Tiyo's stomach! Crockta and Gorit had body fat as well as muscles, so they didn't have such clear abs. Tiyo stretched out and posed in front of everyone. The gnome showing off his muscles in front of orcs!

“Cough!”

Gorit opened his mouth, “That gnome friend over there is good.”

“The guards of Quantes don't neglect their training! Ohhh!”

“Quantes?”

It was an unfamiliar name. Caburak explained, “Father, they came from the south.”

“The south, do you mean the wilderness?”

“Even below that.”

Surprise appeared on Gorit’s face. There was only one place beyond the wilderness. And nobody had come from that place in a long time.

“Perhaps?”

“That south.”

“Hah...” Gorit looked at Crockta again. Unlike his previous erratic behaviour, it seemed like he was pondering something. “Somehow it seems correct. You said that you were alive.”

Crockta nodded. “Yes.”

“Do all the orcs in the south say this?”

“Of course.”

“Then you must remember the saying.”

Crockta understood what he was saying. Crockta opened his mouth and they both spoke at the same time,

“Bul’tar!”

“Bul’tar!”

The voices of the two people combined. Gorit got up. Crockta also got up. At the same time, the two bumped fists.

“Nice to meet you, Warrior Crockta!”

“Likewise, Gorit!”

Crockta finally met a real orc in the north.

Gorit asked Crockta about the south. Crockta replied carefully and sincerely. Gorit nodded at the story of the orcs on the continent. He especially formed a fist after hearing about Crockta’s mentor, Lenox.

“The orc’s soul still lives on in such a wonderful place.”

“I think so as well.”

“The north has forgotten all of this...hah...I am ashamed.”

In the north, the only place that still followed the orc’s traditions was Orcheim. Now even Orcheim was being threatened by the

Great Clan. The orc who had become the great chieftain was really mad for war. He wanted to make the entire north the territory of the orcs.

“The events in the north will also affect the south.”

“What do you mean?”

“Once the southern wall is opened, that crazy chieftain won’t leave the continent alone.”

Crockta realized something.

The north would become completely opened in 10 years. The remnants of the creatures were still in the forest, but any army could go against them. Then the continent and the north would go to war.

“Maybe the great chieftain is already thinking about it. The Great Clan has recently been heating up their war preparations.”

Gorit hit the surface of the hot spring. Ripples spread out.

“You mean...”

“The time that the Great Clan started to hunt slaves and invade other tribes on a massive scale was around the time you opened the north.”

“.....!”

“There are many shamans in the Great Clan. It isn’t unusual for them to read this happening in the sky.” Gorit said with a firm expression, “The great chieftain wants to unify the north and then invade the continent.”

“.....!”

“Something strange...”

The butterfly effect.

Crockta was well aware of this. Any action he did would bring about tremendous changes that he couldn’t predict. As Jung Ian, Crockta had assassinated many people and sometimes changed the situation of the world. In the permanently sealed secret records, Jung Ian was probably the wildest butterfly in the world.

Crockta’s expression hardened. Tiyo’s face became serious. Only Caburak had an unknown smile on his face.

Gorit hit his son in an attempt to alleviate the atmosphere.

“This guy, Caburak. What were you doing all this time?”

“I did some traveling.”

“What type of trip...!” Gorit shouted. His eyes shook as he became angry again. He swallowed back his anger and whispered, “All your power has disappeared...”

“.....!”

Crockta and Tiyo looked at Caburak. Caburak just laughed while revealing his broken teeth.

“You can’t deceive me. You had much stronger blood than your mother, who is a shaman. But...”

Gorit had been very glad when Caburak came back. It wasn’t simple because Caburak was his son, but because a strong tribe member had returned. Caburak was a mighty shaman so they could resist the great chieftain threatening the north.

But now the power felt inside Caburak was at the level of a mere shaman, maybe even less.

The power of his son Caburak, who had been called a genius shaman, had almost disappeared. His magic power that was like the ocean, faded like the bowl had broken and only faint pieces were left behind.

“.....”

Caburak just smiled instead of answering. Gorit shook his head with a dark expression. Then he spoke again, “Cough! No. Something must’ve happened. I won’t ask anymore! It is enough that you came back safely.”

“Thank you.”

“Aish!” Gorit shook his head and sprang up. “I need to meet the mayor of Dejame so please enjoy this slowly.”

Then he left the hot spring alone. Crockta and Tiyo couldn’t say anything as they watched Gorit put on his clothes.

They didn’t know anything about Caburak. At first, they thought he was just an optimistic orc but he turned out to be a genius shaman. Now he was an unfortunate man who lost all of that magic power.

But Caburak’s face still looked casual. “Father is right, I lost too much. Should I tell you? Kyulkyulkyul.”

“Caburak...”

“I don’t care so don’t worry about it.”

Caburak slowly lowered his body. His body was submerged under the surface of the water, leaving only the area above his nose revealed. His eyes flashed through the vapor of the hot spring. Despite saying he was broken now, Caburak’s eyes were calm and

straightforward.

A strange sensation was coming from him. His eyes seemed like he was looking into the distance. Then his shoulders suddenly trembled. He was recalling the past.

Within a short period of time, Caburak's body rose up again. His pronunciation became clearer.

"I said I would show you Orcheim's Holy Land."

Crockta nodded. They stopped by here because of that in the first place.

"I couldn't tell my father but before showing you the Holy Land, I want to tell you why I lost my magic power."

"You don't have to explain..."

"No, I heard Crockta's words about the gods and realized something. That is why I have to tell you."

The two people couldn't say anything. Caburak raised a hand to the surface of the water. He stared at his hand soaked in water like it was burning.

"I saved the world."

What did that mean? Crockta and Tiyo cocked their heads in confusion.

Caburak looked at them and laughed. Then he said once again, “I risked my life to kill a demon and saved the world.”

“.....!”

His eyes were shining. Crockta realized that Caburak was serious.

A shaman who saved the world.

Crockta nodded. Caburak had his own story. Crockta wanted to know more about this orc.

“I understand. Tell me more.”

“It is a long story so...I will tell you on the way to the Holy Land. Let’s leave. It is hot.”

“I see.”

Crockta and Caburak left the hot spring. The tough bodies of the orcs emerged from the water. But one person wasn’t seen.

“Huh?”

Crockta looked around and found Tiyo. He hadn't risen from the hot spring where he was soaking himself.

“Tiyo?”

“Um...”

Tiyo winced. This wasn't the dignified gnome proud of his physical appearance. “Get up first...I...slowly follow...”

“What...?”

A shy attitude like he had lost all confidence! What had made him so timid?

Crockta followed Tiyo's gaze.

Tiyo was looking at Crockta and Caburak's bodies and slowly lowered his gaze. He moved past the orcs' solid chest and abdomen. Then the part of the orcs that was shrouded by steam...

That...

Tiyo dropped his head. Crockta couldn't say anything...

“I'll go first...come slowly...”

“Thank you dot...”

Chapter 78 – Orcheim (3)

“I have traveled around the world. I wandered to the northernmost part of the continent and saw the most beautiful lands,” Caburak said.

They walked from the hot spring towards the Holy Land of the orcs hidden deep in the forest. The ecology of the forest gradually changed. There were strange plants that he saw for the first time. The green forest gradually became white, silver and a mixture of other colors. Flowers and plants with a strange beauty that couldn't be seen anywhere else stood in front of them.

“Wasn't the land of the dark elves in the north?”

“At that time, such limits didn't apply to me. Kyulkyulkyul.” Caburak laughed.

“Did you change your appearance?” Crockta asked.

“Kyulkyul, something like that.”

It was said that changing his appearance and deceiving others was very difficult magic. Crockta nodded. Caburak was certainly a mighty shaman.

“I found an ominous presence in that place.”

Caburak recalled his memories. It was the presence of a demon. It had been sleeping a long time to regain its strength, and its power was so strong that the fallen beings of that land were raising themselves into undead.

“I asked for support from the dark elves but...they didn’t believe me.”

“Um...”

“The demon was soon about to wake up. I had no choice but to get rid of it alone.”

He was a great demon who called himself the demon king. He still hadn’t recovered his strength but his undead army made him the worst to face alone. If left alone, he would be resurrected and not just the dark elves, but the orcs and most of the north would be devastated.

That’s why Caburak faced him alone. He used the treasure of his family, the artifact called ‘Constellation Staff’, but it was destroyed during the battle.

Caburak was determined to die to stop it. He fought using everything he had. Thus, after using all his powers, he succeeded in killing the demon. The price was his magic power, the Constellation Staff and...

His life force.

“I won’t be able to live for a long time...kyulkyulkyul!”

“.....!”

Caburak laughed like it didn’t mean anything.

“Since I lost my strength and couldn’t freely move around the north like before...I tried to return to Orchem. I had just barely reached the territory of the orcs when I was captured by the Great Clan and sold as a slave. Then we met, Crockta!”

His eyes were telling the truth. Caburak omitted a lot of the story, but Crockta knew of his hard work. Caburak, the orc shaman who sacrificed his life to save the world. But his story wouldn’t be remembered by anyone in history. His noble sacrifice wasn’t recorded anywhere.

Now Caburak didn’t look like a normal orc to Crockta. Crockta asked, “How can you laugh?”

“We’re here.” Caburak pointed to the front instead of answering. Crockta turned his head.

There was a cave. An unknown, refreshing feeling was felt from it. It was the opposite of the demonic energy of the Forest of Creatures.

“Something feels good dot.”

“Kyulkyulkyul, follow me.”

Upon entering the cave, Crockta felt a sense of déjà vu. Yes, it looked similar. It resembled the path that he walked towards the Hall of Fame in Orcrox. The cave was artificially cut, like someone had touched the wall.

They walked through the darkness. Caburak created a light at his fingertips to light up the way. They kept walking. Finally, there was a large space at the end of the cave.

A monument stood there.

“This...”

It was the same as the monument that had the warrior’s laws carved on it. There was writing in the ancient orc language that he couldn’t understand.

“It is a unique object from our god,” said Caburak. “We don’t believe in the gods. The Goddess of Benevolence, God of Light, God of War, etc. They aren’t gods, they are just stronger than we are.”

Tiyo nodded. Gnomes traditionally didn’t have a religion. They were usually atheists.

Caburak laughed. The sound of his low laugh rang through the space. He raised the light to reveal the words written on the monument. They were different from the warrior's laws.

“Crockta,” Caburak called out. His eyes were clear. It was no longer Caburak's voice.

“The world is like dust that runs into the void.”

Crockta's eyes widened. He heard a similar story somewhere before.

“If you look at the universe, the world is empty and all living things will eventually sink into the void.”

“.....”

“Some people believe in heaven after death, but it is inevitable that they will sink downwards.”

It was the story told by the demon when Crockta obtained the Demon's Belt. Crockta touched the belt. It didn't respond. Caburak was talking about the same nothingness, but his voice was somewhat gentler.

“In this tiny world, is your Bul'tar meaningful?”

“.....!”

“I killed the demon and saved the world. That was my honor. But Crockta, in a world that will sink anyway, is our clamoring meaningful? Don’t you think?”

Caburak was still laughing.

Crockta couldn’t answer. If he hadn’t obtained the Despairing Demon’s Mouth, he might not have considered his answer. But he had been infused with the idea of the voice by the Demon’s Mouth. He witnessed it, making this question too difficult. In the end, everything would die.

Caburak kept laughing as he looked at Crockta. “What do you think, Crockta?”

Crockta looked at Caburak. The face of this broken orc seemed to already have its own answer.

Crockta replied, “It doesn’t really matter.”

“Hoh.”

“No matter what meaning it has, I will do what I believe. I’ll just do what I have to. Even if it doesn’t make sense, I will walk along my own path.”

“Even if no one acknowledges you? What if no one understands,

or if the world is against your beliefs?”

“It will be the same.” Crockta also laughed as he looked at Caburak. “If the road is solitary, I will be a little lonely. But that is it.”

Caburak’s expression changed. His eyes grew larger and he started to laugh out loud.

“Only loneliness...you really are an orc. Crockta.” Then he pointed to the monument. “His voice came and he looked at us. He promised us only one thing.”

Caburak cried out loudly, his voice echoing throughout the cave.

“We will look so that you aren’t lonely.”

He also heard this somewhere before. A familiar face popped into his head.

Lenox.

‘God, please acknowledge me. See that our honor won’t be lonely.’

Lenox had said this before passing on the warrior’s laws.

Caburak's voice continued, "He who we don't understand or can't understand. He who builds the world and supports the world. And he who always watch us."

Crockta and Tiyo listened. Caburak's voice sounded like a spell in their heads.

"He who blows the wind along our back when we walk the road alone." Caburak's eyes turned towards the monument. "This is our god... no, our pathetic belief."

"....."

"I sacrificed my life to save the world. But nobody knows. If this was meaningless, how lonely would I be?" Caburak hit Crockta's shoulders. "So I desperately hoped. Someone is watching. That is why we walk through life with a sense of honor."

"That is the case."

"We believe in the forgotten god of the orcs, the nameless god."

Silence filled the space.

Tiyo spoke like he wanted to break the atmosphere.

"We are the same dot. We gnomes are atheists. One gnome said that if there is something they can't understand, it isn't worthy of

their faith. If they couldn't understand, there is no reason to believe in it. But we gnomes sometimes pray for salvation. Orcs are like gnomes."

"Then Tiyo, you also believe in our nameless god. You can shout Bul'tar nicely."

"Bah, people who preach are disgusting dot!"

"Gnomes too. Kyulkyulkyul!"

They left the Holy Land. It was called a Holy Land, but it was just a cave and monument.

He asked Caburak, "Well, the reason why... it is the only relic left by our god, so we call it the Holy Land."

"I see."

Crockta looked up at the sky. There was no difference from the sky in reality. If he kept on playing Elder Lord, he would forget that this is a game. Once he heard about the orc's beliefs, he felt like this world was more realistic.

Looking at the smiling Caburak and straight-backed Tiyo, he could hardly think of them as meaningless existences. The nameless god.

As Caburak said, he was watching over them. Crockta was locked in his thoughts. And at that moment, an arrow flew out from among the bushes.

“Again?” Tiyo rolled his body and cried out like he was tired. Caburak ran towards the place where the arrow had fallen, while Crockta lowered his position and grabbed his greatsword.

“This isn’t an arrow from a dark elf.”

“Then who dot?” Tiyo asked.

“It is from a gnome’s crossbow.”

“What?”

Tiyo’s eyes widened. Arrows flew again. Crockta’s group flung themselves down. Then a voice was heard, “This is the Holy Land of the orcs.”

An alluring female voice. “We can get rid of all of them. Kill them all.”

Crockta looked for the source of the voice and saw a gap in the bushes. A female gnome wearing armor was commanding the unit. She was small but she looked like a beautiful woman. The gnomes followed her order and advanced quickly. They were all carrying crossbows.

“Gnomes...

Tiyo's expression changed. He immediately seized General on his back.

“Tiyo?” Crockta called out to him but Tiyo got up from the ground and fired General towards the front.

“The ones who have forgotten the honor of the gnomes, die dot!”

Colorful flashes hit the gnomes. There was a rain of magic bullets and due to the small size of the species, the gnomes couldn't endure the hit and collapsed. Other gnomes tried to aim their crossbows but Tiyo moved quickly and disturbed them.

Crockta plunged in with his greatsword whenever there was a gap.

“Be careful!”

Crockta blocked the crossbow arrows with his greatsword. The gnomes shouted and tried to reload the arrows. However, giving such a moment to an orc warrior was a precursor to a slaughter. A few gnomes held up shields and spears to stop Crockta. But it was clearly the difference between David and Goliath.

“There is a gnome with an artifact.”

The gnome commander gritted her teeth. She shouted in Tiyo's direction, "You are a gnome! A gnome joining forces with those hostile to us, you should be ashamed!"

"Stop talking nonsense dot!"

Tiyo jumped up. Then Tiyo flinched and stopped as he was about to shout. He was at a loss after seeing the commander's face.

"A tremendous beauty dot..."

Tiyo muttered. The commander was embarrassed.

"...S-Shut up."

Tiyo soon regained his spirit. "I-In any case! Gnomes who are linked with trafficking slaves are shameful dot!"

"Bah, how old-fashioned!"

Their eyes flashed as they glared at each other. At that moment. The bush next to Tiyo started shaking. It was the enemy. A gnome soldier jumped out and aimed a spear at Tiyo.

"...Tiyo!" Crockta shouted.

The spear was heading towards Tiyo's chest. It was only for a moment.

“Stupid child.”

Tiyo skillfully dodged the attack and placed his arm around the enemy gnome's neck.

“...K-Keok!”

Tiyo seemed hesitant, but he soon put strength in his arms.

Crunch.

The gnome's neck was broken and he fell down.

“.....!”

An outstanding body! Tiyo truly was like Bruce Lee.

“Hoo.”

Tiyo let go of the dead and stared up at the sky. He never killed his own people. He was a gnome of the Quantess garrison. He protected gnomes and never imagined that he would kill another gnome.

But the time had come for him to do so. He killed the gnome with his own hands.

‘We walk our lives with honor.’

He remembered Caburak’s words. Then Tiyo nodded. He would just believe as well. His path was right.

Tiyo turned his head. The gnomes flinched. In addition to the powerful artifact, they were afraid of his ability to kill a soldier in a flash.

Tiyo met Crockta’s gaze. Crockta nodded. They were eyes that seemed to understand everything. Tiyo smiled at him.

He was a reliable colleague. If so, there was nothing to hold him back.

“Let’s go, Crockta!”

“Yes!”

Tiyo shouted as he rushed forward with General.

“Bul’tarrrrr!”

Chapter 79 – Willful Negligence (1)

Tiyo fired General. The gnomes simultaneously rolled to the ground. A crossbow arrow occasionally flew but Tiyo promptly avoided them. General's punishment followed towards the shooter who threatened him.

“I will kill you if you don't surrender.”

Crockta said as he aimed his greatsword. The orc's terrifying momentum caused some gnomes to drop their crossbows.

“Everybody, continue to fight!”

The commander shouted. But the gnomes gradually stopped resisting. Their fear reached fever pitch when Tiyo lowered General.

“Kuaaaaak!”

“Shooting arrows towards me without being prepared dot!”

Tiyo indiscriminately fired magic bullets from General. The colorful light caused the bodies to shake like they were being electrocuted. The gnomes stumbled as their bodies twitched.

“Aaaack!”

A ruthless act! Gnomes began to lose their fighting spirit. The commander shouted again.

“Anybody who tries to flee is a fugitive!”

This caused a backlash with another gnome. “In the first place, it was wrong to attack them when we were just scouting!”

“Yes, just looked at the crude and rough orc warrior! We should’ve retreated!”

“These guys...!”

An internal schism. Crockta smiled and approached the commander. She flinched.

Other gnome soldiers stepped back. Now she was standing alone in front of Crockta. Crockta pointed his greatsword. The brutal orc warrior holding a greatsword against the small female gnome was a very unfair match-up.

The orc’s greatsword like it was going to chop her up at once. The shivering gnome pulled out a sword and pointed it at Crockta. Crockta smiled and leaned the greatsword against his shoulder.

“I will kill you if you don’t surrender.”

“.....”

She was undaunted as she clutched her sword and glared up at Crockta. Crockta also stared back. The two people continued the staring contest.

“Ohh...”

Crockta’s bloodthirsty eyes that seemed like he could kill her right now! In the end, she dropped her eyes and her greatsword.

“Understood. I-I surrender.”

“Good. Drop all weapons.”

Once she surrendered, everything became straightforward. The gnomes abandoned their weapons. Once the battle was over, Caburak appeared behind them.

Caburak approached the commanding gnome and said hello with a bow.

“It has been a long time, Yona.”

“...Caburak?” Her eyes widened as she saw Caburak. “Is it really Caburak? You were alive?”

“I just left the village for a while. I didn’t die. Kyulkyulkyul.”

They both seemed to know each other. She was going to open her mouth-

“Why are the prisoners chatting. Everybody shut up dot!”

Tiyo shouted. The gnomes became quiet. Yona also closed her mouth. Tiyo looked at the gnome soldiers with a bloody look on his face. He walked in front of them like an instructor dealing with army recruits, kicking their legs every time they showed disgruntlement.

But the gnomes didn't rebel. Tiyo was a ruthless person who had broken the neck of a gnome soldier at once. A villain who tortured his fellow kin!

“You have been captured dot. From now on, don't make eye contact with me dot.”

“.....”

“If you follow obediently then you won't be hit dot.”

Tiyo said as he walked away. The gnomes followed after him. Yona paused and followed after meeting Tiyo's intense gaze. Crockta and Caburak shook their heads as they gazed after him.

“Do you know her?” Crockta asked.

“Well...we played together a little bit when we were kids.”

“You must feel uncomfortable.”

A childhood friend had become an enemy. She wouldn't be the only gnome that he knew.

“I'm okay.” Caburak smiled and pointed to the sky. He followed his finger and looked upwards. “He is watching us.”

Crockta also smiled.

The orcs noticed when Tiyo brought the gnome prisoners to Orcheim. Tiyo made the gnomes fall to their knees in Orcheim's central square. Then he shouted like a conqueror.

“You guys are prisoners dot! If you behave then there will be no more pain! But!” Tiyo turned towards Yona. “If you are rebellious, you will regret...ouch!”

Orcheim's leader, Gorit appeared and hit Tiyo.

“Hrmm, that friend is very excited. Ignore him Yona.”

“No.”

Yona stared grimly at Tiyo standing behind Gorit. Tiyo also glared back.

Crockta watched the war of nerves between the two gnomes and suddenly recalled an old memory. It was an old memory of love. They met on the battlefield and assault rifles and rocket launchers suited her. She and Ian also fought at first like the two gnomes.

“Rude man!”

“What dot! You shouldn’t be so disrespectful! If you thought I would be nice because of your pretty face, you are an idiot dot!”

“W-What?”

Yona frowned and turned away. Tiyo became embarrassed and stammered.

“B-Bah. That was a slip of the tongue. Originally, soldiers don’t show their enemies any mercy dot.”

“.....”

Yona shook her head and didn’t answer. As the atmosphere flowed in a strange direction, Gorit coughed and cleared it up.

“Humm! Kuheom! Anyway, the relationship between Orcheim and the Altanas gnomes wasn’t bad in the past. But you suddenly joined hands with the Great Clan and attacked us.”

“.....”

“Many orcs from Orcheim had already been captured by the Great Clan and it is unknown if they are dead or alive. So...”

Yona dropped her head. Gorit was about to make a declaration of punishment. At that moment, Caburak interrupted.

“Father.”

“Stay out of this Caburak.”

“Now that you are in charge of this situation, let’s detain them and ask some questions.”

“The orcs of Orcheim must see the punishment...”

Gorit stared at Caburak. The appearance of the smiling idiot couldn’t be seen. This was the powerful shaman Caburak that he knew. At this time, his son seemed like a wise man.

“Umm.”

Gorit kept staring at Caburak before nodding.

“I understand. First, I will listen to their story.”

Gorit nodded at some orcs. The gnome soldiers were detained while Yona was brought aside by Gorit for a discussion.

Crockta, Tiyo, and Caburak joined as the ones who captured the gnomes. The questioning took place in Gorit's home. Yona sat in the drawing room of Gorit's house. There were three orcs and one gnome sitting across from her.

“Yona, what is the reason for Altanas suddenly joining hands with the Great Clan?”

“.....”

“We can't be generous anymore if you stay silent. Even if...” Gorit had a determined expression on his face. “Even if you are the daughter of Altanas' leader, Golito.”

Yona bit her lips. Crockta and Tiyo exchanged glances. She was a high-ranking person. Her clothing was different from the other soldiers.

“Because of you, we orcs...!”

“Calm down.” Caburak stopped Gorit. “Yona was captured due to

multiple reasons.”

“What do you mean?”

Yona looked down and didn’t say anything.

“She found us and attacked first. She was only accompanied by a crossbow unit. The orc warrior Crockta was present in that place.”

“.....”

“She attacked first because she knew you before.” Gorit said while looking at Yona.

Yona shook her head. “Nonsense. You may think what you like, but I didn’t know you were there.”

“Still, what were you trying to do at night? You should’ve known that it wouldn’t have worked.”

Yona was silent. Caburak placed a hand on Yona’s face. She tried to shake Caburak off but a white light emerged from his hand. It was a healing spell to get rid of fatigue.

“It wasn’t your intention to do this. You couldn’t have foreseen these results, so this attack could be called willful negligence.”

Silence fell after Caburak's words. Yona didn't say anything.

Tiyo glanced at Yona with a complicated expression before clearing his throat and speaking.

“Hum hum, I'm sorry dot.”

Yona looked at him.

“Yes, your subordinate...”

He was referring to the one whose neck he broke. Yona shook her head. “Suddenly talking nonsense.”

Tiyo huffed at Yona's cold answer. “I-I apologize for killing your subordinate! It was very rude dot!”

“Bah. Okay. Then I will tell you.” Yona looked at Gorit. “I am a soft female gnome being threatened by three scary orcs, so I have no choice but to tell you the information.”

Gorit's eyes shone and he nodded. “That's right. We are really cruel orcs. We might have cut off your fingers and tortured you.”

“Oh my. I can't bear it.”

Yona smiled. Her body was small but her face was that of a

beautiful woman. Tiyo couldn't take his eyes off her.

“My father is afraid.”

“About what?”

“The future of the northern gnomes.”

Yona touched the table with her finger. Then her hands moved like she was drawing a map.

“These are the orc, dark elves and human territories in the north. But the gnomes are scattered everywhere.”

“Orcheim is the same.”

“However, in the end, you are still orcs. The Great Clan can accept you at any time.”

Gorrit swallowed his words.

This was true. The Great Clan opened their doors to any orcs. It was the reason why the number of orcs in Orcheim was gradually reducing. The Orcheim warriors who maintained the warriors' traditions were powerful, so any who wanted to join the Great Clan were accepted.

“My father thinks that the gnomes need a territory. And the rugged Luklan Mountains is the best place.”

“Why all of a sudden? Why now?”

Gorit shouted.

The dark elves, orcs and gnomes of the Luklan Mountains had always maintained a good relationship. Despite it being a rough place, they continued to interact with each other and became close neighbors.

But things changed after the Great Clan and the gnomes joined hands. The dark elves and orcs were captured by the Great Clan. After the gnomes' technology and knowledge of the terrain were communicated, the Great Clan pushed at them.

After this change, the Great Clan didn't wait for Orcheim to join them like before. If they didn't follow the Great Clan, they would become slaves. If this continued, all Orcheim orcs would become slaves.

“Hard times are coming.”

“Hard times?”

Gorit's eyes changed. He seemed to know what she was saying.

“Soon, the north will be connected to the continent to the south.”

“.....!”

“You seem to already know this.”

“A little bit. But how can that be the reason?”

“According to the prophecy of the Great Clan’s shamans, the continent has developed significantly over the north. Population, technology, etc.” Yona sighed. “Once the two areas are open to each other, the result is obvious.”

“You can’t be sure.”

“But I can make a good prediction. Who will protect us at that time? Orcs? Dark elves?”

“So you joined with the Great Clan?”

“The great chieftain wants to unite the north in order to fight against the continent. No, the crazy chieftain wants to invade the continent. So he made an offer to my father. I’ll give you Luklan if you hand over the other species.”

Yona raised her head. Then she looked at Gorit and Caburak. The drawing room became quiet.

In the midst of the silence, Crockta opened his mouth. “All of this is due to the great chieftain.”

Everyone’s gazes gathered on him. Surprise appeared on Yona’s face.

This orc warrior was someone she didn’t know. A primitive orc warrior tattooed like this was rare in the north. In addition, the skills he showed in the previous battle indicated he was more than an average orc warrior. He was also accompanied by a gnome with an artifact.

It was strange that an orc and gnome were traveling together.

“What about the dark elves? Are they also joining the Great Clan?”

“They are still watching.”

Crockta glanced at Caburak after hearing Yona’s reply. The gazes of both people met. For a brief moment, they shared many things in their eyes. Caburak laughed. He understood the meaning of Crockta’s expression.

“Crockta. I don’t believe in destiny. But if destiny exists, perhaps the gods made it so that I met you.”

Crockta also laughed. At that moment, the door to Gorit's house opened and an orc shouted.

“Gorit! The Great Clan has come with the Altanas gnomes! There is a huge number of them! Orcheim is in danger!”

Gorit's eyes widened. The moment that he spoke...

Crockta jumped up. “Tiyo, we have to go to the Temple of the Fallen God.”

“That's right dot.”

“But what if there are people blocking our way?” Tiyo laughed as he understood Crockta's words. Then he replied with a smile. “Those who try to stop us will regret it.”

“Then what if a grudge is formed and we will have to fight the Great Clan?”

“We didn't intend to do that but if it happens, it can't be helped dot.” Tiyo raised General. Then he looked at Yona. “Just like this beautiful lady, it will be a willfully negligent action.”

Tiyo shrugged at Yona's surprised expression. Crockta smiled and said.

“It is willful negligence.”

Caburak extended a fist to Crockta. The two fists touched.

Caburak could no longer feel his magic power. The current Caburak could only do low-level spells that didn't require a lot of magic power. But Crockta felt something stronger than magic power coming from Caburak.

"I have no grudge against the great chieftain and I don't want to fight. But..." Crockta drew his greatsword and shouted. "If the time comes for me to kill him, I will call it willful negligence."

At this moment. The fate of the north changed.

Chapter 80 – Willful Negligence (2)

Orcheim and Dejame were being attacked at the same time.

The warriors of the Great Clan, as well as those integrated from the lower tribes, ran in the Luklan Mountains. The momentum of their march as they carried hammers and axes was really fierce! But their breakthrough was interrupted by an orc running out of Orcheim.

“Aaaagh!”

One of the orcs tried to attack, but his body was cut in half.

The opponent kicked his head as the orc’s lower body twitched on the ground. His head had been cut off. Wearing a red headband, full body tattoos, and a greatsword, the enemy was a strange orc warrior.

It was Crockta. Now every one of his gestures was deadly.

[Status Window]

‘One who Reached the North’ Crockta, Orc Warrior.

Level: 57

Achievement Points: 245400

Assimilation: 85%

Abilities:

Peerless Mountain Seizing Strength (Pinnacle)

Regeneration Authority (Pinnacle)

Leyteno's Heart Swordsmanship (Pinnacle)

Extreme Fighting Spirit (Pinnacle)

Heart and Soul Penetration (Pinnacle)

Tattoos of War, Honour and Fighting Spirit (Pinnacle)

Army Crushing Roar of Madness (Pinnacle)

Creatures Butcher (Essence)

All of his already existing skills had reached the Pinnacle rating.

After defeating the behemoth and opening the north, the system had rewarded him by raising all his Essence skills. He also got a new skill called ‘Creatures Butcher’.

This gave Crockta a new perspective when fighting. The ranks of Essence and Pinnacle wasn’t just a one-stage upgrade difference. It was a bigger growth than all the previous upgrades.

“Feel free to come.”

Crockta was confident that he wouldn’t lose to anyone here. He avoided a flying axe and cut down the enemy. He had completely grasped all the movements of the enemy and used acrobatics to avoid the enemy’s attacks as he cut one neck after another. Heads flew through the air.

Someone shouted, “Who are you?”

Crockta just laughed. He was happy to oblige if they wanted to hear it.

Crockta wielded his greatsword and shouted, “My name!”

The Pinnacle ranked skill, Army Crushing Roar of Madness!

“Crocktaaaaaaaa—————!”

The earth shook like there was a bombardment. The blood of the

enemies flowed. Crockta shot forward like a lightning bolt after his battle shout.

“Crocktaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—————!”

He cried out his name as he smashed the head of another orc. The skull fragments and blood flew into the air. The orcs that had been advancing towards Orcheim froze on the spot.

They instinctively realized. The orc standing in front of them. He was a powerhouse who could decide victory or defeat in this battle on his own.

A one-man army.

“He is like the great chieftain...”, muttered the commanding orc.

Then he shook his head. It couldn't be. There was only one great chieftain. In order to shake off the ominous thought, he shouted at the warriors following him, “I am Akbahal, a warrior who has received the title from the great chieftain!”

Then he lifted his axe.

“Follow me! Kill that cheeky orc! For the great chieftain!”

The morale of the warriors rose as they lifted their weapons.

“Kuweeeh!”

“Great chieftain!”

“To the Great Clan!”

The orcs ran towards Crockta. Their spears and swords aimed at Crockta. The crossbows of the gnomes in the rear also aimed to turn the orc into a beehive. Crockta swung his greatsword and blocked them all at once.

“Die!”

His defense broke and Akbahal and the orcs aimed at Crockta. Dozens of weapons were locked on Crockta.

Kakang!

The greatsword blocked it. The fight between the orcs and Crockta continued. The orcs’ eyes widened as they felt themselves being pushed back, despite the numerical advantage. Whenever Crockta took a step, they had to step back.

Peerless Mountain Seizing Strength! Crockta swung his weapon with great strength. He aimed for all the orcs at once. The bizarre giant greatsword, Ogre Slayer fell over their heads.

Puok!

Puok!

Flesh and bone fragments flew in the air. The warrior Akbahal hastily threw himself back. It was ridiculous. Akbahal clenched his teeth and rose to his feet. The orc called Crockta was walking towards him. His eyes saw the weapon and his vision dimmed.

Akbahal's head flew in the air.

“Oh my god!”

A terrifying monster that killed Akbahal with one blow! The morale of the soldiers plummeted after Akbahal's death. Every time Crockta moved, another orc soldier died. The orcs kept falling back.

Suddenly, Crockta stopped moving forward. The clan warriors sighed with relief and used the chance to catch their breaths.

Crockta laughed. The battle wasn't over because he stopped. Behind Crockta, the warriors of Orcheim ran out. Their morale had risen to the sky after witnessing Crockta's force.

“Waahhhh——!”

The battle cries of Orcheim's warriors rang through the Luklan Mountains. Crockta watched as they broke through the helpless

Great Clan warriors.

Orcheim was completed. Next was Dejame.

Crockta started running. His physical abilities far exceeded his previous left after gaining Peerless Mountain Seizing Strength and Regeneration Authority. His muscles were filled with a tremendous strength, and it felt like he was flying. His stamina wasn't exhausted.

In an instant, he reached a ridge. The dark elf village Dejame was below him. Numerous orcs surrounded the village. There was a battle between the invading orcs and the dark elves trying to stop them.

Arrows rained down on the invaders but the defenses were gradually being shaken by the orcs' offensive.

Crockta took a deep breath. Air was condensed inside his body. Crockta gave strength to his abdomen. His diaphragm became as hard as steel. His roar rattled the Luklan Mountains.

"Bul'tarrrrrrrrrrr————!"

His roar halted the orcs and dark elves. The battlefield fell into a moment of panic. Crockta smiled and leaned towards Dejame. His thighs swelled like they were going to burst. His body soon burst out.

Every time he pushed against the ground, the landscape passed by in a flash.

It was a tree. It was a rock. Tree. Rock. Tree. Tree. Tree.

And the enemy. Ogre Slayer split the enemy's flesh asunder, causing a fountain of blood to erupt with every flash of its blade.

“Uhweeeh!”

“W-What is going on?” The orcs still didn't understand the situation as they yelled. Crockta was kind enough to explain it to them.

“I am the warrior Crockta! You who have invaded the Luklan Mountains!”

Two orcs blocked his way. Ogre Slayer slaughtered the two orcs because they could use their weapons. Limbs flew into the air.

“All of you will die!”

Dejame was surprised by the sudden emergence of an orc warrior. The commander of Dejame grasped the situation and ordered his soldiers to shoot.

“I'm the reinforcements from Orcheim, so don't shoot!”

The dark elves couldn't believe their eyes. "There's only one person for reinforcement?"

"No matter how the orcs...!"

But the situation was reversed due to one orc crushing the enemies. The orcs surrounding Dejame started to slowly thin out as if they were swallowed by a beast. Dejame's commander, Janaru watched from the highest spot and gulped.

"It is a sight that is hard to believe..."

The orcs who climbed the barrier and the ones who resisted were all killed by the greatsword. Everywhere he passed, a terrible fountain of blood would spurt out.

After Crockta joined the fight, the dark elves regained their numerical advantage. Now the dark elf warriors rushed out of the barriers to wipe out the rest. They used rapiers and arrows to remove the orcs.

"Hoo. Hoo."

Crockta took deep breaths. There were dead bodies all around him.

He looked up at the sky. Memories of the wars he experienced were superimposed over it. He had been tired of the cruel battlefield, but now he was once again standing over it.

“If you don’t kill, you will die.”

There was the corpse of a dark elf at his feet. The eyes were blank as he was already dead. Crockta closed the elf’s eyes. He always asked himself the same question. Still, there was no answer.

‘Is this the right thing?’

He didn’t know.

‘Is it fair?’

He didn’t know.

However, he could only do what he believed.

“I-I, I received the title of warrior from the great chieftain.”

“Is that right?”

“If you kill me, you will surely be slain by the Great Clan and its chief. If you let me go then I will...”

Crockta raised his head. He saw an orc looking at him. The hand in his armor was shaking. His eyes were distorted by fear. Crockta started laughing. It was a pitiful sight for an orc warrior to be

begging for his life, instead of maintaining the pride of the great chieftain.

“You will surely become the target of the great chieftain if you kill me.”

“I see.”

“That’s right. So...”

Ogre Slayer cut off his words. The head of the last Great Clan warrior flew in the air.

“Then it can’t be helped.”

Another victim was thrown into the Colosseum. There were five orcs, four dark elves, and two humans. One gnome. The majority of them were carrying weapons, but there was no fighting spirit in their eyes.

He looked up. His men were pushing down several more orcs and dark elves. They rolled on the dirt ground before rising to their feet.

But their eyes were still frightened. They grabbed their weapons and slowly moved backward. Was it still insufficient?

He threw away his axe. Now he was bare-handed.

“Win your freedom.”

There was hope in a few eyes. He laughed. His prey found a ray of hope and raised their weapons towards him. It made no difference if he tore them apart with his bare hands or with a weapon. The prey exchanged glances with each other. They arranged themselves in a battle formation. The orcs were in front, the dark elves in the rear and the humans and gnomes between them.

How pitiful. Such things were useless in the face of an overwhelming power difference.

Then the prey rushed at him.

“Waaaah!”

“Kuaaaak!”

The orcs gave a battle cry.

He smiled and stomped his foot. The earth shook from the tremendous power. The orcs stopped like their feet were tangled together.

He roared. “Kiyaaaaaaaaaaaaack!”

It was a terrible scream, a roar that seemed to tear at the ears and souls of those who heard it. Within a short time, he was moving forward. The difference in weight became clearer. The orcs looked up at him blankly.

He looked down at them and laughed. Then he swung his fists. They tried to resist, but his fists smashed their weapons and crushed their skulls. Bits of brain and red blood were scattered on the ground of the Colosseum. He stepped on the dead bodies and moved forward.

Now the prey were fearful again. Their eyes were panic stricken. It was a desperate reminder that their lives were no longer theirs. It was a mix of helplessness and violence.

It was his favorite sight.

The dark elves fired their arrows. He waved his arm with annoyance and the arrows fell after hitting his forearms.

He grabbed the head of an orc in the front and lifted him up. The orc desperately swung the axe but it got stuck on his hard skin. He gave strength to his hands. The orc turned red then blue as blood gradually rose.

The orc's skull exploded.

"Boring," he muttered.

Now there was only fear in the prey's eyes. They chose complete despair over helplessness and violence. Their willpower disappeared.

He charged. The prey thrashed in horror. Neither arrows or axes harmed him. He crushed the orcs in turn. Tearing off their limbs and piercing their bellies. He grinned at those who were waiting for their turn.

Within 20 minutes, all the people close to him had been turned into gory corpses. It was a cruel image where internal organs and limbs were mixed together, making it impossible to know which part belonged to who.

At that moment, his subordinate approached. "Did you have enough fun?"

"It is insufficient."

He had an overwhelming body that was twice the size of regular orcs. He was the great chieftain, leader of the Great Clan who ruled over the northern orcs, Calmahart.

"The war has yet to come." His subordinate returned the axe to him.

He continued, "It will be opening soon. All the orcs are gathered under the banner of the Great Clan and the Luklan Mountains will

soon be dealt with.”

“Hammerchwi has returned.”

“That...” Calmahart glanced over. His subordinate was nervous.
“Hammerchwi and all the warriors have returned injured.”

“.....”

“According to Hammerchwi, he met an orc from the continent...”

Calmahart took his axe. “The continent?”

“Yes.”

“From below the border?”

“Yes.”

“Kukuk...” Calmahart laughed. “How interesting. Where is Hammerchwi now?”

“He is being treated by a shaman.”

“Let’s go.”

“Yes.”

The subordinate followed Calmahart. He was a large orc but he looked like a small child standing next to the great chieftain.

The subordinate asked, “What should we do with the rest of the slaves?”

Calmahart stopped.

At the back of the Colosseum, there were some slaves waiting for their turn. They had been gathered to sate Calmahart’s thirst for blood. Like those who were killed earlier, they were originally destined to face Calmahart in the Colosseum.

Their gazes turned towards Calmahart. Fear mixed with hope in their eyes.

“My excitement has cooled down.”

“Then...”

“Release them.”

“I understand.”

The faces of the slaves brightened. And at that moment.

Calmahart threw his axe. The axe tore through the air towards them. The axe split apart the orcs and gnomes standing in a line. The line of orcs, dark elves and humans were literally cut in half.

A feast of blood occurred.

Calmahart added, "If they survived."

He turned around.

"...Hiccup!"

The gnome standing at the far end was pale as he stared at his severed hair.

Chapter 81 – Stranger (1)

The orcs invading the Luklan Mountains retreated. Most of them died or returned with terrible injuries. Crockta's name was stamped into the northern orcs. Now he was obviously an enemy of the Great Clan.

“Golito.”

A gnome with a long beard stood in front of Gorit. It was Golito, the leader of Altanas.

Golit of Orcheim, Janaru the leader of Dejame, Crockta and Tiyo were gathered in Altanas. The disarmed gnomes lowered their heads but Golito glared sharply at Gorit.

“Gorit.” Golito puffed up his chest. “There is nothing more to say. Dispose of me.”

“Are you sorry towards the many who have died because of your actions?”

“That would be a lie. I don't regret it.”

The orcs and dark elves surrounding Golito cursed at him. Due to Golito's decision, the Luklan Mountains had been covered with blood. However, Golito still maintained his dignity.

“Once the border opens, the gnomes will clearly be in a crisis. It is fate so I was just trying to do what I could for us gnomes.”

“Due to your anxiety, the blood of numerous people were shed.”

“My anxiety? Can’t you see it? The destruction of our world in the war is right in front of us!”

“That is a leap!”

“No! You underestimate the situation! No matter what the situation over the border is, the crazy chieftain has already decided on a war. Soon the dark elves and you orcs will fall into slavery. When the time comes, Orcheim can just be incorporated into the Great Clan. But us?”

He looked at Janaru, the leader of the dark elves. “It is the same for you too! You are just foolish elves!”

“Shut up.”

“Don’t turn away from this. The world is already on the verge of war. Janaru, you should think about this if you really care about Dejame. Whether it is fighting against your fellow people or selling them to the great chieftain, you should plan your future! Why don’t you understand this?”

Golito argued with wild eyes.

“As long as the Great Clan has decided on war, the gnomes will be destroyed! This world is about the survival of the fittest! All I did was try to live! I will never regret my decision! Who can blame me? Then blame me!”

There was silence at Golito’s strong sincerity. No one could blame him.

At that moment. Someone struck Golito.

“Cough!”

The person was Tiyo. “Stupid bastard!”

Golito touched his cheek where he was hit and raised his head. The culprit was a gnome he hadn’t seen before.

“Who are you?”

“My name is Tiyo! I am a rational gnome who was the captain of Quantes Gnomes Garrison and I can’t stand such stupid words dot.”

“Quantes?”

“That’s right dot.” Tiyo raised General to his shoulder and cried out. “I have come over the border from the continent with Crockta

dot!”

Golito’s eyes widened at the declaration. There was a commotion in the surroundings.

“But where I come from doesn’t matter dot. I just wanted to tell you that you are someone who has lost the cool judgment of a gnome. You are a stupid gnome dot!”

“What?”

“Anxiety based on fear will just proliferate. That is why us gnomes always look objectively. But you are a stupid gnome who lost your composure due to fear! No, you are just a stupid person dot!” Tiyo declared. He was more confident than he had ever been.

“B-Bullshit!”

“Think about it! If, as you say, the great chieftain has turned to madness, do you think his peace with you will last forever?!”

“Surviving the catastrophe in front of us is more important than the distant future! Survival is a priority!”

“That is why you are stupid dot! Gnomes who only think about one thing is a gnome who has lost their reasoning to fear!” Tiyo was speaking to the other gnomes as well as Golito. The gnomes avoided the intensity in his eyes. “Guys like you are under the illusion that you are doing something important! You become

confident after feeling like you've made a big decision, but that is just a delusion dot! Poor man, you are really poor dot!"

Golito's eyes distorted at Tiyo's words. "If so, what should I do? We gnomes...!"

"Your reasoning dot!" Tiyo shouted. "Don't ask me, ask your sense of reason!"

"I am rational...!"

"You are asking the fear that is eroding your heart. Listen to the answer from your reasoning, not your fear dot!"

Tiyo brought up the essence of magic engineering. "Then I'll ask you again Golito! The answer! Is it selling your old friends, making other species into slaves and cowardly joining hands with the crazy orc who knows nothing but war?! And!"

Tiyo shouted towards all the gnomes in Altanas. "Resisting evil deeds to the end, isn't that the reason why we follow 'ein guter Wille'?"

".....!"

Golito's eyes widened. This gnome, he was shouting in the ancient gnome language that was no longer remembered. Everybody knew it but they ignored the old stories.

“How is it Golito? What do you grey brain cells say?”

Golito couldn't open his mouth. He also knew it. But he had been afraid of the destruction that would come, afraid of the death of his own people. He just wanted to stop the destruction of the gnomes living in Altanas.

Golito dropped his head. Then someone responded on behalf of Golito.

“You are an outsider so you can speak easily.” Tiyo turned his head. It was Golito's daughter, Yona.

As Tiyo stared at her, Yona also faced him. The gazes of the two met.

Yona laughed. Tiyo looked embarrassed by her sudden laugh.

“And you can speak correctly because you are an outsider.”

Golito looked at his daughter. “Yona.”

“Father, I respect your will. You made the decision for our people. But the gnomes of Altanas and I aren't so weak. We can fight.”

“.....”

Yona looked back at the gathered gnomes. “If we bow down to the Great Clan, we will be the same as them. Father, you always told me. No, you said this to all gnomes, not just me.”

“Yona...”

“Rather than being full pigs, let’s be hungry gnomes.”

The gnomes of Altanas nodded. It was an old saying passed down to the gnomes.

Crockta made a strange expression as he watched the gnomes. As he listened to the conversation between Tiyo and the gnomes, familiar words rang in his ears. There were words and sentences that he read in philosophical books during his breaks in the army.

Was this really a game that reflected the tastes of the makers, or was Elder Lord connected to a real world? He didn’t know.

As Crockta thought this, Golito was lamenting.

“I see...”

“Yes.”

“Yona you, and everyone else’s will...”

Golito looked around at the gnomes. They nodded. The gnomes respected Golito but they also questioned his decision.

Golito sighed. "I'll acknowledge my misjudgment."

Gorit tied Golito up and spoke. "You are in custody. For the crime of betraying your neighbors in the Luklan Mountains..."

The gnomes were nervous. Gorit exchanged glances with the dark elf Janaru. Gorit declared.

"There were be no hostile actions under the agreement that a new leader sits down with us and joins forces with Orcheim and Dejame to protect our home from the Great Clan."

".....!"

The gnomes were shocked by the exceptional concession. The tied up Golito looked between Gorit and Janaru. Gorit just laughed. "Don't be too surprised. As our gnome friend from the continent said, I made the decision using my reasoning."

"...I see."

"But there were many sacrifices. So you will need to apologize and prepare reparations for them, as well as make efforts to reclaim those sold as slaves."

“I accept.”

It was an amicable ending. As Crockta watched, he suddenly recalled a sentence from a philosopher. He was somehow captured by the idea of the great sight that would occur if he spoke those words now.

‘I will. I won’t.’

He hesitated over whether he should say it or not.

“As an outsider watching this, I suddenly had a thought.” Crockta was filled with a burning desire and opened his mouth. Everyone’s gazes focused on Crockta.

“As I think about it, there are two things that fill my heart with every increasing admiration and awe.

“.....?”

“One is the stars shining in the sky above me and the other... Crockta paused and everyone focused on him. “It is the moral law within us that tells us the way to walk.” (TL: Paraphrased from philosopher Immanuel Kant, in Critique of Practical Reason)

An outright imitation! Crockta opened his eyes and looked around.

“.....!”

The people in the surroundings were looking at him with awe. Tiyo's mouth fell open.

“I-I thought you were just an orc good at fighting but...”

“Such an intellectual sentence...”

“Unbelievable...coming from an orc...!”

“What a wonderful verse that contrasts nature with the human nature...!”

Crockta closed his eyes. Then he smiled widely.

Crockta and Tiyo prepared to leave Orcheim.

They had experienced the orc's Holy Land and ended the dispute in the Luklan Mountains. Now it was time to leave. Gorit, Caburak and many orcs saw them off.

“Crockta, thank you and sorry for giving you more baggage. Good luck.”

Caburak said.

Crockta was now heading towards the Temple of the Fallen God. However, it was in the territory of the dark elves.

Crockta had made an enemy of the great chieftain. No matter how strong he was, he couldn't deal with all of the Great Clan alone. So Crockta would head to the Temple of the Fallen Gods and also try to persuade the dark elves, one of the two peoples in the northeast to oppose the Great Clan.

Gorit held Crockta's shoulder and nodded.

"The dark elves aren't easy because they are closed off. Our Luklan Alliance will keep sending messengers so you don't have to bear all of the burden. Good luck."

Orcheim, Dejame, and Altanas had joined together in one alliance.

Crockta nodded. The warriors of Orcheim who fought with Crockta wished him good luck and extended their fists. Crockta bumped fists with numerous warriors.

"I will surely return dot." Tiyo's voice was heard. Crockta turned to see Tiyo talking to Yona.

“Bah. Whether you return or not...”

“If you don’t give a definitive answer then I will just return home. I am a straightforward man dot. If I am in your heart then tell me now.”

Tiyo said without hesitation. Crockta felt admiration towards him.

Tiyo was a real man.

At his mighty request, Yona avoided his gaze and replied in a small voice.

“...Stop by when everything is finished.”

Tiyo laughed. “I understand dot. Wait for me.”

There was another piece of good news.

Tiyo received a clue on his father’s whereabouts. Tiyo asked the gnomes of Altanas while giving his name and description. Yona and the other gnomes told him about his father. It was said that he carried mysterious goods and drifted around the north.

The last time they saw him was a few years ago when he was heading towards the area of the dark elves to the north.

Thus, Crockta and Tiyo left the Luklan Mountains.

“It feels like everything is in the north dot.”

The Temple of the Fallen God.

The Great Clan’s war.

Tiyo’s father.

All the answers were there.

“How about it Crockta? Are you confident about the future?”

“Of course!”

Crockta grinned.

There were no users in the north. However, this was the place where Crockta had felt the freest. Everything meshed together like cogwheels without any discomfort. Every single person that he met here was living their own lives.

Crockta liked this world. Maybe the users barging into Elder Lord had created debris.

“What is that animal dot?” Tiyo asked.

Just before they completely left the Luklan Mountains, they saw the creature tanding in the middle of the forest.

It looked like a lizard but it had wings. He thought it was a dragon but it didn't have the majesty of one. However, the body was big and the eyes wild. Flames were emerging from between its snout.

“Isn't that a drake?”

“Drake!”

It was a powerful flying monster inferior to a dragon, but much stronger than a wyvern. The drake started to come towards them, emitting threatening flames.

Crockta and Tiyo exchanged glances.

“Are you confident ,Tiyo?”

“Of course dot.”

They laughed, raising their weapons and rushing towards the drake. It was a world where he didn't know when something unexpected would happen! Crockta felt a burning sensation in his chest as he jumped.

“Events without notice are welcome!”

The drake shot its flames towards Crockta. However, his greatsword split the flames apart. The drake’s terrible face came closer. As Ogre Slayer was descending towards the drake’s head,

“What are you doing to Third Dragonnnnn!” shouted someone from behind them.

The moment that Crockta hesitated. The drake slammed its forehead into Crockta. Crockta flew through the air and landed on the ground. His ribs were aching. He could taste blood in his mouth.

“Kuheok! A-Are you okay? Third Dragon! Why did you do that?”

Crockta sat on the ground and laughed.

Look, he really didn’t know when something would happen.

Chapter 82 – Stranger (2)

The drake named Third Dragon unhappily looked down on Crockta, who returned the glare without any hesitation. An orc and drake were having a staring competition.

The dark elf Anor, who appeared with Third Dragon, intervened between the two of them. “Haha, why are you doing this? There was a misunderstanding, but you can get along now. Isn’t that right? Right, Third Dragon?”

“Grrrrr...”

“Urrrrrung...”

“No, Mister Orc, why are you growling?”

“I’m not.”

“Huh?”

“Urrrrrung!” Tiyo made a ferocious sound from the rear.

“That... gnome?”

“Urrrrrung!”

“Excuse me...”

“It’s okay! I am imprinting with the beast dot.”

“Beas...t?” It seemed more like he was the beast. Anor shook his head. “Excuse me.”

Crockta and Anor backed away from the drake and the gnome.

“I am alive. I am Crockta. I’m heading north.”

“Yes, yes. I am Anor. That friend over there is Third Dragon.”

“It’s amazing that you’re friends with a drake.”

“Huh? Amazing? No, what are you saying? Hahahahat! No, no. Yihihihit! Crockta is funny!”

It seemed like this man liked compliments more than Crockta thought.

“Are you a dark elf from Dejame?”

“No. I’m originally from Nuridot, but I came down for a while because of Third Dragon. I was surprised to see orcs from the Great Clan two days ago.”

Nuridot was the closest dark elf city to here. Anor noticed his expression and added, “Is Crockta from the Great Clan?”

“No.”

“I see.” Anor seemed to think he was from Orcheim because he came down from the Luklan Mountains. “How are the Luklan Mountains? Is it great to live there?”

“It is a good place.”

“Then... Third Dragon can live here well right?”

His last words felt somewhat lonely. Crockta turned towards Anor. He was looking at Third Dragon with sad eyes.

“Third Dragon originally lived in the forest north of Nuridot... there are a lot of drakes there.”

“Then why did you come here?”

“That...”

Thanks to the psychological warfare with Tiyo, Third Dragon spread his wings and slowly started to fly upwards. Third Dragon’s wings were large and wide.

“Third Dragon was harassed by those drakes.” There was an abundant gust of wind from Third Dragon’s wings. The wide wings resembled a wyvern more than a drake. “Third Dragon is a mix between a wyvern and a drake.”

A monster hybrid! Third Dragon soared into the sky and roared.

Tiyo walked over triumphantly. “Look, the drake eventually ran away!”

“.....”

It seemed more like the drake was tired and wanted to ignore him, but Tiyo had a very confident expression on his face.

“So, what serious story are you talking about over here? I will solve all your worries dot!”

“.....”

Anor didn’t believe it but in the end, he talked about Third Dragon.

He had accidentally met a young Third Dragon in Nuridot Forest. Third Dragon was a mixture of a drake and wyvern. He learned that Third Dragon was being harassed. He was similar but different to them, meaning the drakes didn’t acknowledge him.

As Third Dragon grew, his wings became bigger and the harassment of the violent drakes became worse. Now Anor was the only friend Third Dragon could rely on. Anor didn't like it and decided to bring him to Luklan Mountains where there were no drakes.

“What dot? Where are the ones who harassed him dot!”

Tiyo looked at Third Dragon flying in the sky. It was as though he couldn't stand that someone he acknowledged was being ignored.

“You made a mistake Anor dot. That drake isn't a guy who will run away!”

“Excuse me...”

“That guy, I will fix it dot! A man can overcome anything with a strong will!”

Tiyo started to preach a philosophy that was unique to him. Anor ignored him and looked at Crockta.

“Where are you going in the north?”

“Nameragon.”

Nameragon was the city of dark elves in the north that was in

contact with the Temple of the Fallen God. It was the next most flourishing city after Spinoa, the capital of the dark elves where the world tree was located.

“It will be difficult... I am a dark elf but, the dark elves are closed off. They won’t easily accept an orc.”

“It’s okay. I am prepared.” Crockta shrugged. There was no way, but he would see once he got there.

Anor sighed, “Dark elves are overly hostile to strangers.”

The flying Third Dragon landed on the ground again. Third Dragon approached Anor and cried out. Crockta and Tiyo didn’t know what he was saying, but Anor nodded like he understood the meaning.

Anor spoke with a serious expression. “Wandering orcs have been seen. However, they are holding the flag of the Great Clan...”

Wandering orcs were similar to the Kapur Tribe, but they were small-scale and drifted around. The lack of a base meant they survived by robbing people. Recently, the Great Clan accepted orcs at random so even the thieving orcs joined them.

To a small city like Nuridot, even a small group of orcs was a big threat.

“What do we do?”

“Those guys are heading to Nuridot?”

“Yes.”

Crockta and Tiyo exchanged glances.

“Huhuhut! A crisis is an opportunity! We will help the dark elves dot!”

Crockta also nodded. “Good.”

In the past, he raised his reputation in order to enter the elven city of Arnin. If the dark elves didn’t let them in, they would do something wonderful to impress them.

“Let’s go dot!”

“Yes!”

Crockta and Tiyo’s eyes shone like they wanted to run at once.

Anor blocked them. “Excuse me, wait a minute!”

“Huh?”

“Nuridot is a long way from here! It will take all day...”

Crockta and Tiyo just laughed. “You can go slowly. We’ll go ahead and will be waiting.”

“Huh?”

Then Crockta leaned down towards the ground. Tiyo jumped up and grabbed Crockta’s neck. His two legs twisted together and he held on firmly to Crockta’s chest.

“Crockta, ready!”

“I’ll go first!”

Crockta carried Tiyo and started running towards the north. Anor stared at their backs blankly.

Crockta took advantage of his physical abilities and quickly escaped from the Luklan Mountains. He passed through the forest and onto a plain.

Tremendous speed!

Tiyo started firing General behind him. The colourful flashes of light caused a long trail along Crockta’s path. It was like the brilliant tail of a comet.

Tiyo cheered. “Kiyooooooooo!”

Suddenly, Crockta shouted, “Tiyo!”

“What is it?”

“If you want to cheer me up, then please shoot in front of me! If you shoot behind, I can’t see the cool rays of General!”

“.....!” At that moment, Tiyo flinched. “C-Crockta...”

“Huh?”

“This isn’t to cheer you on... and if I shoot forward...” Tiyo asked hesitantly. “Perhaps... do you not know about action-reaction...?”

“.....!”

He had heard that term a lot, but what did it have to do with the situation now? But it was enough to make Tiyo dismissive of him.

Crockta muttered bitterly, “I know...”

In any case, Crockta was able to reach Nuridot more quickly with the boost from General. The city of dark elves gradually became clear. Once there, they found dark elves confronting the wandering orcs.

Crockta slowed down.

“We are here, Crockta.”

The dark elves and wandering orcs turned their attention to the duo. There were confused expressions on their faces. The sudden appearance of a fierce looking orc carrying a gnome!

Everyone staring blankly at him. Crockta coughed. Now it was time to think about a great line. A saying that would cause a reaction similar to Altanas! Crockta recalled that moment and imagined experiencing it twice.

“What, who is this jerk?” said a rogue orc.

“.....!”

Before the shocked Crockta could respond, the other orcs laughed and sneered.

“Yes, he is even carrying a gnome. Is this orc serving the gnome?”

“An orc being a mule, how shameful.”

“Look at the red headband and tattoos, how old-fashioned.”

“He must think it is cool. Look, he is crying. Kuahahahat!”

Crockta’s fists shook. He could tolerate other things, but not someone making fun of his fashion sense.

Greatsword, greatsword.

Tiyo felt his anger through his trembling shoulders and advised the orcs.

“Getting Crockta angry, you will regret it!”

Anor was able to reach Nuridot after a long walk. The sun had already started to set. Fortunately, there seemed to be no problems with the orcs. The town was peaceful.

As Anor headed to the entrance, drunk guards greeted him.

“Uh, Anor. Where are you going?”

“.....”

“I thought you finally ran away. You have no guts.”

Anor shut his mouth and walked through the entrance. He could hear the guards laughing behind him. This didn't change even after entering the village. Every time Anor passed a dark elf, he could feel their unpleasant gazes on his back.

Anor suddenly wanted to see Third Dragon. But Third Dragon was already left in the Luklan Mountains. Anor muttered.

“How are yo...”

As he walked through the streets, he suddenly heard a noise from the town square. He wondered if there was an event, but a familiar voice rang out loudly.

“We protect our beautiful Quantess~ Gnome Garrison~ live with today !”

It was a lousy song. Originally, he would've just passed by but Anor was drawn by the familiar voice.

“Bathe in the blood of creatures ~!”

The voice sounded like a child but a manly impression was coming from the speaker. A drunk gnome was running rampant in the town square. The town's dark elves were clapping around him. He could see an orc with a red headband among the dark elves.

It was Crockta and Tiyo, whom he had met in the daytime.

“What...?”

Anor couldn't believe the sight in front of him. The dark elves were closed off. They didn't like strangers. The dark elves didn't open their hearts to people who were different, even if they were born in the same town. But they were treating these strangers like old friends.

“The beautiful dark elf girl over there! Do you like gnomes?”

“Oh my?”

“I would've dashed over if you were one metre tall, but too bad!”

“Huhuhu.”

The dark elves burst out laughing at Tiyo's joke. Anor had thought that they wouldn't be able to pass the dark elves' area and reach Nameragon. It was due to the isolation of the dark elves that he felt himself. But they had quickly entered dark elf society while Anor hit a wall.

“Great...”

Anor muttered. But he wasn't feeling genuine admiration. Rather, it was the opposite. Anor suppressed it and whispered 'great' again. However, he couldn't help feeling jealous.

“Hey, halfie,” called out a dull voice from behind him.

Anor sighed and turned around. A dark elf male with a well-tempered body like a dark elf looked at Anor and laughed. A group of young dark elves were following him.

“Your face is especially white today. Your ears are also reduced right?” He smiled. The other dark elves laughed at Anor. “If this continues, you will die after 100 years.”

“How old if the halfie right now?”

Anor glared at them. But none of the dark elves were scared of him. Anor turned back around.

“Where are you going Anor?”

“Go away, mongrel.”

That’s right. Anor was a half elf, a mixture of a human and dark elf. That’s why he was persecuted in dark elf society. He ignored the taunts from behind him and stepped away. Someone called to him again.

“Anor!”

He tried to ignore it, but the voice was different. It was very big

and loud. He turned his head and saw the orc warrior Crockta approaching.

“You are alive! Did you arrive just now?”

As the sun went down, the shadows cast over Crockta’s face made him look more vicious. Crockta greeted him with pleasure before looking between Anor and the dark elf group.

“Oh, Anor’s friends. It is a pleasure.”

Anor flinched.

The dark elves, including the leader Nakai, were especially prominent among the dark elves who didn’t like strangers. Anor had been harassed for being a half-blood, despite being born and raised here.

Problems might arise...

Nakai’s voice interrupted his thoughts.

“Oh, orc warrior! Welcome. Hahahaha.”

Nakai seemed glad to shake hands with Crockta.

Chapter 83 – Alive (1)

“Oh, orc warrior! It’s nice to meet you. Hahahaha.”

“Are you alive? I am called Crockta.”

Nakai greeted him with a smile. Crockta laughed and nodded.

Anor felt strange as he watched the two greet each other. He was captivated from the unreal scene that seemed to be separate from the rest of the world. Obviously, they met for the first time today.

The Nakai he knew would’ve mocked and expressed dissatisfaction towards other species entering Nuridot. He was always the one who kept spouting the rhetoric that orcs were dirty and ignorant.

So why were they now shaking hands like this?

“Uh, it is Anor! How is Third Dragon?”

Tiyo approached. Nakai looked down at Tiyo and asked for a handshake.

“You seem like a dark elf with manners. I am Tiyo dot,” replied Tiyo with a smile.

Nakai originally called gnomes ‘little dwarves.’ Now it seemed

like Anor was the only one not properly connected to Nuridot. Anor turned around with a bitter expression.

Before he knew it, the sun had completely sunk below the horizon. The twilight sky was covered with the veil of night. Once again, the moon took to the sky.

Anor trudged towards his house.

He felt it was unfair as he thought about all the times he had been persecuted. He might've been a half-blood, but at least he resembled a dark elf with his dark skin and long ears. The orc and gnome had completely different appearances.

However, they were welcomed. Maybe it wasn't because he was a half-blood, but Anor's existence itself? That was the only conclusion he could come to.

He stopped moving as someone suddenly grabbed his shoulder. Anor panicked. He turned around and saw a face that he knew, causing him to become even more frightened. Crockta's rough face could be seen in the darkness.

"Y-You surprised me!"

"It seems like there are no inns around here." Nuridot wasn't a very big place. In the first place, the dark elves weren't very accepting of outsiders, so lodging businesses weren't very common. "So I've decided to stay at your house."

“I never gave permission...”

“That’s why I came. To ask you. Kulkulkul.”

Anor scratched his head. His house wasn’t very spacious and wasn’t fit to welcome guests. Rather, it was shameful to show to others. But he felt nervous about being stared at by Crockta.

“Then...”

The moment he looked up at Crockta to tell him to come along...

Something flew over Crockta’s head.

“...Eh?”

The shadow of a dragon shone from the light of the full moon behind Crockta’s head. No. It wasn’t a dragon. It resembled a dragon, but wasn’t a dragon. It resembled a drake, but it wasn’t a drake. It was drake with the wings of a wyvern, Third Dragon.

“Third Dragon?”

He had obviously released Third Dragon into the Luklan Mountains. Anor asked him to live freely without coming back. He firmed up his heart and moved away from Third Dragon. So why was Third Dragon flying about Nuridot? Third Dragon was

heading north towards Nuridot Forest, the habitat of the drakes.

“Eeit!”

Anor started running. Crockta and Tiyo stared at his receding back before gazing at each other. They chased after him.

“Why are you back?”

Third Dragon glanced over at Anor, who had his arms folded over his chest.

“You’ll be harassed again by the other drakes here.”

Shake shake.

Third Dragon shook his head. His intentions were clear.

Crockta and Tiyo watched him from behind.

“Hey! Are you going to live with this harassment all your life? Go back and make other friends! Eh! You are just a little bigger! So live!”

“Grrrrung.”

“Ahh, what are you saying?”

Anor hit his chest with frustration. Crockta approached and said, “Anor, give him a moment.”

“Huh?”

Crockta grabbed the back of Anor’s neck and tugged him backward.

“Eek?”

As soon as he was dragged back, a fire flashed around Third Dragon. It was a fire breath that illuminated the dark forest.

“.....!”

Third Dragon spread his big wings in an instant. The breath was blocked by the wings. There was black soot, but there didn’t seem to be any major damage. Third Dragon revealed his sharp fangs.

A drake was approaching from the forest. The drake and Third Dragon growled wildly at each other. The uninvited drake shouted something and Third Dragon roared back. The war of nerves between two drakes!

It didn’t end there there were two more drakes behind the

uninvited one. They threatened Third Dragon. Third Dragon was brave, but there were three drakes.

They watched each other.

Anor was sad. His appearance was superimposed over Third Dragon.

“Third Dragon...”

Crockta watched it and stepped forward. “I didn’t intend to intervene but...”

He pulled out his greatsword. A black light emerged from Ogre Slayer

“It is rude to act like this in front of me.”

The drakes looked at the orc who suddenly appeared and made absurd facial expressions. Crockta thought that the expressions on the reptiles’ faces were very good. Then he glared at them.

[Creatures Butcher (Essence) has been used.]

It was the skill he got after hunting behemoth with the great hunter Shakan. It was an anti-creature skill that increased attack

power against the beast and gave the creatures a sense of oppression that neutralized their movements. Then he used the Pinnacle rank skill, Army Crushing Roar of Madness. Even if he didn't roar loudly, the madness of the orc warrior who swept through many battlefields came alive.

Crockta glared at the drakes.

[Heart and Soul Penetration (Pinnacle) has been used. Identifying the drakes.]

[The drakes in this forest are fairly strong, but they are weaker than you. They are stuck. The smell of the slaughtered creatures on you have awakened their fear.]

He used Heart and Soul Penetration to read them.

The drakes retreated.

[The drakes want to run away, but can't because of their pride.]

Crockta just laughed. Their pride. He increased the strength in his eyes.

Kuoooooh-!

Steam rose from Ogre Slayer.

The drakes realized. If they moved even a little bit forward, that sword would slaughter them. That wasn't an ordinary orc.

The drakes were forced to turn around. Third Dragon glanced at them, giving a warning until the end. Anor was amazed as Crockta repelled the drakes. The orc warrior was stronger than Anor initially thought.

Looking back, Crockta had been about to bring a big sword down on Third Dragon the first time Anor saw him. What if Anor hadn't shouted quickly that time? He believed in Third Dragon's strong skeleton and skin, but maybe Third Dragon might've ended up worst from the blow. The back of that orc looked cool.

"Anor."

"Huh?"

"I don't know you very well, but I've been thinking." Crockta said as he put away his sword. "Why do you want to send Third Dragon away to the Luklan Mountains?"

"You just saw it. Every day is like this."

“But Third Dragon wants to stay here.”

“Still...”

Crockta approached him. “Aren’t you the one who actually wants to leave?”

He had eyes and ears, so he knew about Anor. He was a mixed breed among the dark elves and humans, causing the town to ignore him. When Crockta and Tiyo had asked about Anor, the dark elves had clearly despised him.

“.....”

Anor looked blank at Crockta’s words. It was like he was looking into his heart.

“Maybe...it might be true.” Anor’s shoulders dropped.

They left Third Dragon in the forest and headed back to Nuridot. They walked through the dark streets and talked. Anor asked, “How did you do it?”

“What?”

“Become close to the dark elves.”

Crockta just laughed. “I’m not close to them.”

“But everyone was pretty friendly...”

“They are acting like that because they need me to do something.”

Nuridot had panicked when the group of orcs appeared in the daytime. It was widely known that the mad chieftain was preparing for war. The wanderers were holding the flag of the Great Clan. The wanderers gave two options: fight or be robbed. Nuridot’s power wasn’t that strong. Big sacrifices would need to be made to fight them off. But it was a situation where they couldn’t accept the orcs’ unreasonable demands.

It was a dilemma. Then all of a sudden, a gnome and orc appeared. The dark elves were puzzled while the orcs laughed at them.

And...

The orcs were wiped out. The orc warrior sliced off the heads of five laughing orcs in an instant. The attitude of the wandering orcs changed immediately. Dozens of orcs raised their weapons against him, but he didn’t blink. Rather, he overwhelmed their forces alone.

In the eyes of the dark elves, he looked like a god of war.

The fearsome orc warrior explained to the dark elves. The wanderers would come back, so he would stay and keep watch until that time. He was heading towards the Temple of the Fallen God, but he wanted to cooperate with the dark elves in order to pass through their territory. He also wasn't unrelated to the Great Clan.

To the terrified dark elves of Nuridot, he was their savior. Therefore, the duo entered as guests of Nuridot. His story was widely circulated so no dark elves dared disparage him. Thus, the dark elves were forced to become friendly and embrace them. In particular, Tiyo's cute looks and cheerful attitude was fresh for the dark elves.

Kindness to the weak was useless, but kindness to the strong was something they could respect. That was the world.

"I see..."

Anor's expression didn't change despite Crockta's expression. Crockta had gained the respect he desperately wanted all his life. It was because of strength.

"The world is unfair," muttered Anor.

He had endlessly committed to becoming a member of the dark elf society. He didn't cause any problems. But he was still a stranger to the dark elves. However, Crockta instantly received awe from the dark elves because of his strength.

The reason was strength.

“Yes. The world is unfair.”

Crockta grinned.

They returned to Nuridot and arrived at Anor’s house. His house wasn’t large. It was a small and dilapidated house. It was too crowded with the oversized Crockta and Tiyo. Anor wanted to concede his bed but Crockta and Tiyo declined. They covered the ground with Anor’s blankets.

“Are you uncomfortable?”

“It’s okay. Tiyo is already asleep.”

Tiyo was already snoring. He had a talent for falling asleep anywhere as soon as he put his head on the floor. The gnome was really cute when he closed his eyes and slept like a newborn baby.

Crockta also tried to close his eyes.

Suddenly, Anor said, “Crockta, I had spend my whole life trying to be recognized as a dark elf of Nuridot.” His mind had been complicated all day. In particular, he had been shocked by the sight of Nakai being polite to Crockta. “But I am still an outsider. Why?”

Crockta looked up at the dark ceiling. He had only met the dark elf today, but Crockta was able to grasp what Anor was like.

Thus, he felt sadder.

“Anor, what do you want to become here?”

“Me?” Anor thought for a moment. “A good... elf?”

His parents died. His mother, who was a human, had always stressed to Anor.

‘Try to be recognized in the dark elf society. Be a good dark elf and always consider others. Always smile. Don’t hesitate to assist others.’

Crockta continued, “But based on the results, Nuridot’s dark elves don’t want Anor to be good.”

“What...”

“You will never be able to do enough. It is foolish to repeat the same process and hope that the results will change.” Crockta sighed, “Like I told you, the world is unfair. There is no heaven. It isn’t a place where good will and faith will be returned.”

“.....”

“That is all I will say. Sleep well.”

Anor couldn't sleep anymore after hearing Crockta's words.

He turned his head and stared at the darkness below the bed. He couldn't see it but he felt the huge presence of the orc warrior. Crockta tried to fall asleep. He could hear the sound of Tiyo breathing.

Anor whispered, “Crockta. Are you asleep?”

“...Not yet.”

“I'll ask one more question. Is it okay?”

“I don't care.”

Anor wanted to speak, but he couldn't figure out how to start. Anor clasped his hands together under the blanket. His voice trembled a little as he spoke, “Does that mean I need to change?”

“Yes.”

“I tried to live well, only to be bullied like I was doing something wrong. I am the one suffering, so why do I have to change? Isn't there something wrong with this?”

“Anor. Your words are correct.” Crockta’s voice seemed gentler in the darkness. He spoke like he was whispering. “But this isn’t due to right or wrong.”

Crockta chuckled in a low voice. Anor couldn’t help smiling at Crockta’s laughter. His question seemed lighter after hearing the orc warrior’s laugh. He felt like he was facing an older brother.

“The world is just like this.”

“The world...”

“In my neighborhood, we call people like you sweet potatoes. Kulkulkul. Don’t think so hard. Just...”

Crockta laughed once again.

“If they treat you like a dog, you should treat them like dogs as well.”

The next morning, a group of wandering orcs invaded Nuridot.

Chapter 84 – Alive (2)

Trumpets sounded to signal the emergency at hand.

Crockta opened his eyes and grasped the handle of his greatsword. The smell of war flowed from far away. Crockta stared at Tiyo who was also holding General. They exchanged glances.

“Drrrong...”

Anor was still asleep. Crockta woke him. Anor was still sleepy and stared blankly at him.

“Anor, go to a shelter.”

“Huh?”

“The enemy has invaded.”

“Invaded?”

“The orcs from yesterday seemed to have invaded again.”

Crockta had shown them his strength. The wandering orcs had been suppressed and shivered in front of him. If those guys invaded this place again, the flow was obvious. They had attacked here again with the support of the Great Clan.

This time they would use more violent means. There would be no dialogue. They would attempt to kill Crockta. Crockta knew this and couldn't help suppressing a smile.

“Does Nuridot have an emergency shelter location?”

“It will probably be the town hall in the center...”

“Go there.”

Anor fully woke up and discovered the great sword that Crockta was carrying. The morning sun leaked through the window and pierced his eyes. Anor asked, “Crockta?”

He touched his greatsword instead of answering.

“Ah...”

Anor had never experienced killing anyone. Until the great chieftain appeared, the north had been balanced in its own way. There were occasional conflicts, but most of them lived quietly in their villages.

Today, Anor was able to see the face of a man going to battle. Crockta proclaimed that he would kill the enemies with his greatsword calmly like he was saying goodbye.

“I understand.”

Crockta and Tiyo briefed Anor and left the house. He heard Crockta and Tiyo’s footsteps outside. Anor rose from his spot blankly. He ran a hand through his disheveled hair and looked around. He needed to pack up.

‘If they treat you like a dog, you should treat them like dogs as well.’

Crockta’s words from last night echoed in his head.

Anor would have to do the work directly. The world was about action-reaction. Every action in the world came with a counter balancing act. When hitting the enemy, he also had to be prepared to be hit. Could he become an unshakable person like Crockta?

Anor drew an old dagger out from a drawer. He had never used it even once. But it might be necessary today.

‘Son. You should be a good elf.’

His mother’s face and words flashed through his head. He shook his head.

‘Mother, Nuridot doesn’t want me to be a good elf.’

Anor grasped the dagger.

Crockta ran in the direction of the trumpets. It was the outskirts of Nuridot. The dark elves discovered Crockta and shouted.

“Orc! Gnome! This way!”

A guard observing from a watchtower reported the situation.

“The orcs from yesterday are approaching, but there are also orcs on caruks following them. Their equipment is different from the wanderers. These guys...”

The guard gulped and said, “The Great Clan.”

Nuridot’s leader, the dark elf Nadia bit her nails. She fidgeted and stomped her feet. Then she exclaimed, “Send a messenger through the back way to Spinoa.”

“Huh?”

“The Great Clan has come. They aren’t just rabble shaking the flag. but the Great Clan had come directly.”

Nadia pulled a bow from her weapons storage. It was an old but solid weapon. She touched it and confirmed the tension. The militia member tried to protest but she refused and took down a

quiver.

“This isn’t an attack on Nuridot, but an attack on the dark elves. This is just the beginning.”

The dark elf’s face stiffened.

The Great Clan was expanding on a scale unlike before. At the heart was the crazy chieftain, Calmahart. He said that he would try to unite the entire north under the Great Clan, but not many guessed he would actually do it.

However, Nadia’s declaration woke them up from such an easy thought.

This was probably the prelude to the war. The war would begin at Nuridot.

“Victory! Stopping them is the most important thing. I’ll break their noses.” Crockta declared excitedly.

The tense atmosphere loosened at his words. The faces of the dark elves brightened.

The orc Crockta was now their champion. He was the strongest person who suppressed a whole crowd of orcs. There was a rumor that he defeated the orcs of the Great Clan in the Luklan Mountains.

Crockta stepped forward and said, “Open the gate.”

The dark elves’ eyes opened wide in shock.

“Huh?”

“I told you. I will win.” Crockta placed the greatsword on his shoulder. “I will go out and slow down their advance, while you should maintain the defense.”

He said to Nadia and the members of Nuridot’s militia. Nadia nodded.

“Do as he says. He is a person who is far more familiar with battle than us.”

Nadia had lived a long time. Therefore, she had seen a lot of things that others hadn’t. She had heard stories about orcs.

There were orc warriors with bodies covered in tattoos. The current orcs had forgotten the traditions of old. As a child, people had told old stories about the genuine orc warriors. If she met them, she had to respect them. They were strong and it wasn’t just physical strength.

She might be able to see that strength for herself today.

Nadia begged while holding Crockta's hands, "Please."

Crockta laughed instead of answering.

Nuridot's gate was opened.

Crockta walked out. The tattoos on his body empowered him. Tattoos of War, Honor, and Fighting Spirit. They were everything a warrior needed. Honor and fighting spirit. Those two were enough and he would prove it here on the battlefield.

"Good."

Crockta walked up to them. A lone orc and an army neared each other. The two sides stopped in front of each other. An orc walked out from among the group of wandering orcs. It was someone he saw yesterday.

"Why do you keep interfering with us?" He said with a frown, "You are an orc, and we are as well. Do orcs need to fight amongst ourselves? I'll apologize for yesterday's disrespect, so please join us."

"....."

"Under the banner of the chieftain, show everyone what orcs are!"

As he shouted, the group of orcs behind him became louder. The warriors of the Great Clan standing separate from the wanderers also watched Crockta.

“Look, we aren’t lacking in warriors. Let us conquer the north together. Furthermore, we will make the continent kneel under the name of the orcs! The orc’s name! Show them the power of the orc warriors!”

Crockta laughed. These northern guys didn’t know anything. Then he opened his mouth, “Hey, you. The Great Clan guys as well.”

Crockta’s threatening aura started to emerge. Everyone’s looks, including the leader, changed. A tremendous atmosphere.

“Listen carefully.”

Crockta closed his eyes.

At this moment.

In the north, there were no users, and he was Crockta, not Jung Ian. And Crockta was a warrior who could do whatever he wanted. The orc warrior Crockta had already impressed the Luklan Mountains by spouting off some cool words.

Today he also wanted to say something nice.

However, his worries didn't last long. No matter how he thought about it, this was a battle moment that didn't require a series of words. It wasn't like these people would be able to understand it. Just one word would be sufficient.

Crockta opened his eyes.

“No. There is no need to listen, just...”

He placed the greatsword on his right shoulder. His left hand stretched out towards them. Then he lifted his finger. Crockta laughed as their faces distorted.

“Come.”

It was an obvious provocation! The orcs were outraged.

“Kill himmmmm!”

The orc in the front shouted. From that point on, the orcs started their assault. The wandering orcs were the first ones to strike.

Crockta's greatsword moved through the air, leaving two simultaneously detached heads in its wake. Fountains of blood erupted from the orcs' headless corpses..

Axes headed for him from the left and right. Crockta spun his

body and sliced off their wrists. He kicked the opponents who had screamed and grabbed their cut wrists. He trampled on their bodies and jumped.

His goal was the leader of the wanderers.

Crockta flew high in the sky and thrust downwards with his greatsword towards the head of the leader.

Puok!

The gigantic greatsword cleanly cut the body in half. The leader's body fell to the left and right, showing a cleanly cut surface. Blood rained down.

Regardless, he walked forward. Crockta looked like a demon as he became covered in blood. He looked around. Numerous orcs were overwhelmed by his power and didn't dare come closer. Crockta grinned.

"All you have is an advantage of numbers."

Then he turned back around. He could see Nuridot in the distance.

He ran. He ran out of this area before they could regain their spirits. They were weak but there were a lot of them. Bullying him with numbers!

“Too manyyyyyy!”

In order to be successful, he had to move out of this area. There were more enemies than he thought. This was a strategic retreat. The enemy orcs regained their spirit.

Urok, the leader of the Great Clan soldiers, shouted at them.

“Foolish guys! Follow my command! Run at Nuridot!”

“Kuwaaah!”

“Catch that bastard!”

Urok admired the chaos Crockta managed to create during the short engagement. He wasn't an ordinary opponent. The other warriors of the Great Clan, including the chieftain, still looked down on Crockta but Urok was different.

This was the person who beat Hammerchwi. Hammerchwi might be old, but he was an experienced and strong warrior. He had come back wounded and different.

Crockta was obviously strong.

“Kulkul.” He was glad. “I was right as well.”

it was because the worst case scenario for Urok was Crockta's inaction.

“Hey, halfie.”

Anor heard a voice as he entered the town hall. It was Nakai. He was standing here while leading his group.

“This is a great opportunity. You might be pretending but doesn't everybody know?”

They laughed. Anor ignored them. Someone in the hall briefly explained the current situation and how to use weapons. Once the situation became urgent, they would be sent to the outskirts to defend the barriers against the orcs.

“Like this?”

One of the dark elves following Nakai was practicing with a rapier and he stabbed it towards Anor. Anor freaked out and retreated. It stopped right in front of Anor. They burst out laughing.

“Puhahat, look at his surprise.”

“It's amazing to see his ears perk up like an elf's.”

The townspeople paid attention to them. Nakai's group giggled like they hadn't realized the situation yet. They weren't thinking about the aftermath of the battle at all. Anor was secretly hoping they would worsen the situation, then be forced to cry and beg when they were scolded.

He tried to create such a situation.

"Is that right?" asked Anor.

The elderly man teaching the villagers how to use weapons was once a member of the militia, and he turned around after seeing the attitudes of the other dark elves.

"Just this once..." But his expression subtly changed as he saw Anor's face. "...You take care of it. Tsk."

He turned around like it was troublesome.

Anor sighed as he thought.

'How do I not roll over like a dog, Crockta?

The moment that he was fingering his dagger. There was a scream outside the hall.

"Kyaaaak...! Ahak..."

The scream soon stopped. It was silent inside the hall. The scream didn't stop on its own. Rather, it sounded like the person was forcibly stopped by someone.

It couldn't be.

Heavy footsteps were heard outside. There were several of them. The weight of the sound was also different from the dark elves they knew. There was the sound of iron clanking. The visitors knocked on the door of the town hall.

Kung kung kung!

The dark elves gulped.

Kung kung kung kung!

Within a few minutes, the visitors arrived at the door. There was a knock on the door. The door could only withstand a few strikes before shattering. Then the attackers were revealed.

Orcs wearing the flag of the Great Clan. They laughed as they saw the dark elves gathered together.

“What is this, a buffet?”

Chapter 85 – Alive (3)

“What is this, a buffet?”

An orc warrior in steel armor strode forward, causing the dark elves to hurriedly retreat back.

“How fun.”

There were more than 10 orcs, all of which had blood dripping down their sides. It was from the people they had just killed.

“Hiik..!”

Every time they took a step forward, a path opened, like Moses’ miracle of splitting the Red Sea. The orcs stared at the dark elves.

“Isn’t this easy?”

“It seems like everyone is gathered here for us to eat.”

“Somehow, not one of them are looking at us. Kukuk...”

An orc warrior chewed on a piece of bread that was on the table. Then he frowned and spat it out. He wiped his mouth and raised a hand to the shoulder of a dark elf near him.

“Hey.”

“...Yes?”

“Is this tasty?”

“Huh?”

“Will it be tasty if I eat it?”

“That...”

The orc laughed as the dark elf hesitated. Then he grabbed the hair and slammed the dark elf onto the ground.

“Why aren’t you answering?”

“D-Delicious. Delicious,” replied the terrified dark elf.

The other orcs laughed at his appearance. It was a humiliating spectacle.

“Haha, indeed. This is why big ears are my favorite.” The orc kicked the piece of bread he spat out towards the dark elf. “Then eat it.”

“.....!”

“Big Ears, you said it was delicious, so you should eat it.”

The dark elf looked at the orc with trembling eyes. The wicked axe came into view. The blood and flesh on it made it obvious that someone had just been slaughtered. The axe was pushed closer to his face. He smelled blood.

“That...”

The moment the dark elf hesitated, the axe struck downwards. The dark elf’s head was destroyed. The skull was split open and bits of the brain were revealed inside. The dark elves gulped at the horrific cruelty. However, the orcs just laughed like this was a game.

“Hahaha, your personality is so urgent!”

“You should at least listen to these guys.”

“That’s right.”

The leader of the orcs walked towards the podium in the hall.
“Isn’t there a lot of time left?”

The militia member, who had been explaining how to prepare for battle, was shaking on the stage. The orc grabbed the militia member’s ear and pulled.

“Aaack!”

“If you see that I’m coming, you should leave, you fool.”

He threw the militia member downwards. The ear was torn and blood flowed out. The ear was still held in the orc’s hands.

“Eh? Why didn’t you go as well?” asked the orc as he played with the torn piece of ear.

The laughter of the orcs grew louder. The leader also laughed and threw the ear towards the crowd of dark elves. The dark elves shrieked as blood splashed on them.

The orc stood on the podium.

“This is nice and easy. I am the warrior Karmat and I fight under the banner of the great chieftain. We originally intended to collect all of you as hostages... You knew this beforehand and gathered here. How wonderful. I express my sincere gratitude. Kuhahahat!”

The orcs laughed again. None of the dark elves laughed.

Karmat continued speaking, “I don’t know the situation and you are supposed to wait with us until the signal comes but... In the meantime, we’ll be bored. We can’t kill the precious hostages.”

Karmat touched his chin and looked around at the dark elves. “So I thought of a fun game. How about it, do you want to play?”

“Kulkulkul! Let’s do it!”

“How fun!” replied the orcs.

Karmat grinned and nodded. The scene of a group of people enjoying themselves while the other group were terrified was absurd.

“All in favor! I’ll do it! I’m going to!”

“Yes!”

“.....”

“Okay. Let’s start. Um.. first... how about the popular vote? The popular vote.”

Karmat descended from the podium. He gazed at the cowering dark elves in front of him. They all avoided eye contact. “One person. Vote for one person to be killed.”

“.....!”

“Isn’t it good? There must be one person that you don’t like. If

you decide on one person, we will resolve it. Then you can rest for the remaining time without worrying. Isn't this too kind?"

Karmat sniggered. He was enjoying this wicked behavior. He liked having the upper hand and being able to tease them psychologically.

The dark elves were all silent. Karmat knew this would be the case when he decided on the game. So he immediately wielded his axe.

"Kyaaaaak!"

"Kuheook!"

It was a random blow towards the crowd of dark elves. One of the dark elves standing in front was cut in half and die, while another standing next to him had the abdomen cut and his guts spilled out. Another person had a shallow wound.

Karmat smiled and declared, "10 seconds."

He began stamping his foot.

Kung. Kung. Kung.

As the tenth stomp approached, the dark elves started to panic. Karmat smiled and stomped his foot again. Then he tightened his

grip on his axe. The dark elves were shaken. He scanned the faces with his eyes. In the middle of the crowd, one male glared. Karmat laughed and gradually moved his feet.

Then just as he did the eighth stomp,

“Him!”

Someone shouted. Karmat looked in the direction of the loud voice. It was a young male dark elf. Then Karmat followed the direction of the finger.

A dark elf stood with an expression of despair.

“Anor, that brat.”

Anor’s eyes widened. He couldn’t believe this.

Nakai’s finger was pointing towards him. Then his name was called. Anor spread open his arms and looked around.

“What...”

But none of the dark elves looked at him. They turned their heads away from Anor with a relieved expression. His blood

chilled.

The cursed orc was approaching him. “This is a majority vote. Now, if anyone opposes the murder of this Anor, raise your hand.”

They didn’t move. Karmat’s shoulders shook like he was having fun.

“What? No one is opposing? Anor, how did you manage to live this far? Eh? Your heart must hurt. Are you being bullied? Kulkulkulkul!”

The smell of the orc next to him entered his nose. He laughed as he pushed his face against Anor’s. It was the face of an orc, but unlike Crockta, this face was too ugly.

“Is there really nobody who objects? Do you want to save this friend and vote again?”

The dark elves were silent. Karmat let out a large burst of laughter, “This is funny! Yes, Anor! You should’ve lived a better life!”

Karmat placed an arm around Anor’s shoulder. Then he dragged Anor towards the podium. Anor was led like a cow towards the slaughter. He would die. Anor looked at Nakai. Their eyes met. Nakai avoided his gaze. Anor couldn’t help smiling bitterly.

“You should’ve lived better~,” Karmat sang.

Anor's head became complicated. He lived well enough. No, he lived the best in this place. This bastard orc.

Karmat pulled Anor in front of the podium. Anor felt lightheaded. He looked at Karmat. He waited for the axe to swing but it wasn't the end. Karmat walked through the dark elves again.

“.....!”

He came back with Nakai, who screamed, but became quiet after being kicked.

“The rules have changed.” The dark elves froze while the orcs cheered. “This guy, he sells someone out from his own village. Right Anor? Right?”

Karmat said with a sweet smile, “So I have decided to mediate between the two of you in the manner of the orcs.”

He handed a dagger to Anor and Nakai. It seemed like something he was carrying around as secondary weapons.

“Fight.” He was proposing a game with their lives on the line. “I'll give you 20 seconds. If you don't settle this by then, both of you will die.”

Then he stepped back. Anor looked at Nakai. He was holding a

dagger but he didn't know what to do. Everyone's gaze was turned towards them.

Kung!

Karmat stomped his feet.

Kung!

The meaning was obvious. Once that sound was heard 20 times, their necks would be cut. How did he want to meet his end? Anor thought it would be better to stand still and die than be played by them.

However, that was just his thoughts.

Nakai charged. The dagger was swung randomly. Nakai also hadn't learned how to fight properly. The orcs laughed at his moves. But Anor couldn't laugh when faced with the dagger. The blade swung at him.

“S-Stop!”

Anor cried out as he retreated. Something was felt behind him.

“.....!”

He looked back and saw that retreating was blocked by an orc warrior. His expression was like a guard dog. He gestured towards the front.

Anor breathed out as he gazed at Nakai again. For some reason, his forearm was sore. He looked down and saw that it was bleeding.

“Die, hybrid bastard!” Nakai screamed and rushed forward again.

That expression. Something seemed to snap in Anor.

“Uwaaaaaah!”

Anor struck out with his dagger. It was a short encounter. Both of them wielded their daggers but they didn’t enter within range of each other. It was because both feared the blade. A knife was a formidable weapon.

Karmat didn’t like this and the stomping of his feet accelerated.

“10 seconds left!”

It seemed like they had fought for a very long time, but it was only 10 seconds. Nakai urgently ran forward. Anor closed his eyes and waved his dagger.

“Ack!”

Jeurereuk.

One person hesitated. It was Anor.

Anor looked down at his arm. Blood poured out. Nakai had cleverly aimed for his arm. As Anor closed his eyes, Nakai had ducked behind him and sliced his arm. Anor couldn't withstand the pain and dropped the dagger.

Now he was defenseless. The victor was decided.

Nakai headed towards him.

“Hey, Elf. I'll teach you.” Karmat stood next to Nakai. “Aim for the neck. With a knife, you can kill the enemy just be lightly slashing it. Now, calmly.”

He laughed like he was having a lot of fun as he advised Nakai. Nakai's trembling hand moved towards Anor's neck.

Death was near. Anor was keenly aware of it.

“Shit...”

Anor swore for the very first time. Nakai flinched at the wild eyes but he kept staring down at Anor's neck. The blade approached.

“This dog bastard...”

It wasn't a big curse word. Nakai called a bastard a dog bastard. A dog bastard who rolled over like a dog.

The moment that Nakai's blade was about to touch Anor's neck,

“I am a dog bastard.” Anor stood up and stabbed Nakai's neck.

Nakai's eyes widened as he stuttered with a disbelieving expression.

“K-Keok...”

Blood flowed out from where the dagger was stuck in the neck. Anor pulled out the dagger and blood poured out. The dagger in Anor's hand was the one he had brought from home. He had lost the one given by the orc, but this one still remained. He had killed Nakai with that dagger.

It was his victory. Anor muttered, “Dog bastard...”

The orcs cheered at the unexpected ending. Karmat started clapping.

“Hahahahat! Wow Anor, you dog bastard! You aren't like a dark elf. Carrying your own knife, what a great person! Kuhahahat! You

reversed the situation? Puhahahat!”

He laughed like he was excited by the death. Then he placed an arm around Anor’s shoulder.

“Anor, I like you! I like you! Puhahat...!”

But his laughter didn’t last. He pushed Anor away, who fell down with a loud noise. Karmat’s face distorted like he was a demon.

“This bastard...”

Blood was flowing from his chest. Anor had tried to stab Karmat. Anor got up. He was holding only one dagger. The tip was aimed at the smiling orcs on the edge.

“What, this dog bastard.” Karmat no longer laughed. “You mistook foolishness for bravery.”

He raised his axe. “I will just kill you.”

The enraged orc approached Anor. Anor trembled but he was smiling. He was going to die anyway. He had lived like a fool in the meantime. So finally, he decided not to roll over like a dog.

Karmat raised his axe. The blood on the axe still wasn’t dry. Anor realized that death was close. At that moment,

“Kiaaaaaaah!”

There was a roar from the entrance of the hall. Everyone looked over there. Anor couldn't believe his eyes.

There. It was Third Dragon.

“Third Dragon?”

He must've felt that the situation in Nuridot was unusual and came to find Anor. Third Dragon growled as he discovered the orcs in the hall. Flames blew from his snout.

“Third Dragon! No! Run away!”

The orc warriors were familiar with combat and rushed towards the intruder without hesitation. Axes were swung towards Third Dragon. Third Dragon emitted flames.

“Kuaaaaahhhhh!”

“Oooh!”

The orc warriors survived the flames. A translucent shield was wrapped around their bodies. Karmat laughed.

“How did we come here secretly? Kukukuk.”

An unknown light was coming from Karmat's hands. A shaman. He was a warrior, but also a shaman. They had been able to sneak into the town thanks to his magic.

Anor screamed as he watched the orcs attack Third Dragon. "Nooooooooo!"

However, the law of cause and effect in this world acted in a relentless manner. The orc warriors ruthlessly swung their axes towards Third Dragon. They struck Third Dragon's body. There was nothing special. Blood splattered from Third Dragon every time the orc warriors wielded their axes. As the assault from the axes continued, Third Dragon died.

That was it.

"Is that a friend of yours? Huh?" Karmat laughed.

Anor looked at him. Of course, Karmat looked disgusting. Anor raised his dagger instead of answering. Nakai's blood was still dripping from it.

"Hey, are you trying to fight us with that? Puhahat." Karmat laughed. The orc warriors watched Anor like they were excited. They expected an enjoyable game to unfold.

'You should be a good elf.'

He remember his mother's voice.

‘You should be a good elf.’

She always looked sad.

‘I hope you do, but the dark elves' society probably won't let you.’

He remembered the words he hadn't wanted to remember for a long time.

‘If you are in a situation where you can't live as a good elf anymore, have a strong heart and give up being an elf.’

‘I don't think I can live as a good elf anymore. Mother. I'm sorry.’

Anor picked up the dagger. Then he put the blade to the long ears that were the symbol of an elf.

‘Cut off your ears and make yourself a bad human.’

Seokeok.

His ears easily fell off. As his ears fell, the forbidden lineage in his blood stretched out, as if it had been waiting for a long time.

Chapter 86 – Alive (4)

Anor trimmed off both of his ears. The dark elf's unique ears were half cut. The appearance was straight like an elf, but it was a size similar to a human. It was a strange appearance that wasn't a dark elf or human.

Black energy emerged from Anor's body.

“.....!”

Karmat instinctively recoiled. The black energy was an aura of death that frightened all of the living.

“This...”

He looked through his memories. Surely not. This was a strength that was said to be cut off a long time ago in the north.

“Dammit...”

Someone grabbed his feet. He looked down. The dead Nakai had risen and stabbed a dagger in his calf. Karmat dropped down.

“Kuaaaak!”

He grabbed Nakai's head but the undead didn't feel any pain so the arm kept moving mechanically. Puok, puok. The dagger kept

on being stabbed in his calves. Karmat threw Nakai away desperately.

Nakai's body squirmed as it hit the wall. He got up again with a rattle. The bones moved strangely due to being forced out of place from the impact, but he kept on walking back to Karmat.

“Necromancer!” shouted Karmat to his men.

He looked around.

“.....!”

One of his men was hanging upside down in the air. The drake they killed got up again and was chewing on the head of an orc.

“Dammit...”

He was a warrior and a shaman. He could see the deep concentration of magic power in Anor's eyes. It was the magic of death. How did this guy show up? This wasn't an opponent he could match with his magic power.

“Then the way to deal with this opponent...”

He gripped his axe tightly. However, it was difficult to get rid of the undead clinging to his ankles. His body staggered. He needed to kill that guy.

Anor stared at him blankly. Karma gritted his teeth. His companions were approaching. Okay. It was possible if there were several of them.

“Come. We are both...”

But there was something more. He looked at his approaching companions. Their eyes were vacant.

“Dammit...”

Karmat's men were slain by the drake and were now heading towards him in an antagonistic manner. Their hands lifted the axes up high.

Karmat shouted, “The rest! Retreat! Retreat! Join with the ones who are still searching!”

The orc warriors stopped fighting and moved quickly. One of them helped Karmat. The undead chased them, but their speed was so slow that they couldn't catch up. The orc warriors stampeded out of the hall.

“.....”

Once again, a dead silence filled the area. The dark elves shook in fear of Anor. They all avoided his gaze.

“Just like his mother...”

“Cursed blood...” Some of them whispered.

Anor could hear all of it. Anor turned towards the exit. He didn't want to be here anymore.

Just before he left the hall, someone grabbed his clothing and said, “W-Wait a minute.”

“.....?”

Anor turned his head. A female dark elf was behind him. She was part of Nakai's group that always looked at him with scornful eyes. He wondered if she was coming to apologize.

“If you go away...”

“....?”

“What do we do if the orcs come back? You should stay here...”

The other dark elves in the hall nodded. They were afraid of Anor, but they still hoped he would stay here as their protector.

Anor looked up at the sky for a moment. He didn't think for long.

He immediately kicked her in the abdomen, causing her to fall flat on her face.

Anor spat at her and said, “Get lost, you crazy bitch.”

Ogre Slayer broke the neck of an orc warrior trying to cross the barrier. Blood poured out. Crockta used his whole body to swing his greatsword again.

He was protecting the outer barriers of Nuridot. The dark elves were resisting. Arrows flew over the barrier and pierced an orc.

The orcs didn't stop despite being hit by a few arrows. Rather, they gave a sharp battle cry to raise their strength. The pain turned to hatred. The hatred was infused in their axes as they jumped towards the barrier.

The orcs pushed into the barrier and the dark elves shrank back.

At that moment, a huge roar was heard. “Bul'tarrrrrrrrrr——!”

The footsteps of the orcs hesitated. It was like a giant wind was pushing behind them as the fighting spirit of the dark elves rose. The enemies retreated one step like they were caught in the wind. Crockta's shout was an excellent weapon that increased his allies'

morale.

The battlefield became stagnant in that moment. The orcs and dark elves paused at the collapsing barrier. The two sides couldn't attack carelessly.

“You monster.”

As a barrier collapsed, an orc warrior walked towards Nuridot's line of defense. It was the commander of the Nuridot invasion, Urok.

He grinned at Crockta and said, “You are a great warrior. Are you called Crockta?”

“Um.”

“Dark elves, thank this warrior. If it weren't for him, you would already be defeated by us.”

Urok was overflowing with confidence. It was difficult to understand considering that the Nuridot invasion wasn't flowing his way. Crockta looked around. Was there a tactic that he was hiding? There were obviously many orc warriors, but the dark elves were resisting. If he added his own actions, this battle would eventually lead to Nuridot's victory. The warrior Urok had to know this.

Crockta couldn't suppress his anxiety.

“Crockta, won’t you join our Great Clan?”

“There was someone who already made that offer.” Crockta said with a smile.

The leader of the wandering orcs had asked him to join the Great Clan. Crockta had replied by cutting him from his head to his crotch.

Urok had also witnessed this.

“He did, that is true, but I am not like that guy. I am someone who has received the title of warrior directly from the great chieftain, Calmahart. Not just you, but that gnome will also be accepted as one of us.”

The name came out again. Crockta’s eyes narrowed.

“Don’t make me laugh. The north truly is different from the continent, Crockta,” muttered Tiyo from beside Crockta.

Crockta started laughing.

“There are also some dirty bastards there.”

“Didn’t you speak to Hammerchwi?”

“There are also people like Hammerchwi. And they all died.” Crockta grinned. “There is no need to remember their names, the poor bastards.”

Now matter how strong or skilled they were, it was worthless against Crockta. Rather, the name of Caburak from Orcheim was more valuable, despite him losing all his power.

The law of the Great Clan that cut everything with force was just the calculations of a beast. It wasn't what made an orc an orc.

“It will be the same for you too.”

“You are a dangerous person, Crockta. Kuhahahat.”

Urok laughed one more time before whispering to an orc by his side. The person nodded before pulling out a bow and arrow. The bow was a weapon that didn't go well with orcs. Crockta watched carefully.

The arrowhead aimed towards the sky. At that moment, Crockta picked up an axe from the corpse of an orc warrior on the ground and threw it. The axe spun as it flew. However, the arrow was already too far. The arm of the orc shooter was cut off at the same time that the fire arrow flew into the sky. He screamed as blood poured out.

“You noticed pretty quickly,” said Urok.

“What did you do?”

“Don’t think that the great chieftain is blind like other orcs, Crockta. He can see everything on the battlefield. He is a true warlord among the orcs.” Urok raised his axe to the sky. “By now, a shaman of the Great Clan will be sneaking troops into Nuridot and killing its worthless dark elves.

“.....!”

Crockta and the dark elves were shocked.

“Surrender if you don’t want any more meaningless slaughter.”

The dark elves were agitated. Some fidgeted like they wanted to return to the town right away. Their families were there. The morale of the militia dropped rapidly. A sense of helplessness spread, like they were already defeated.

“Stop right now!” shouted Nadia. “Let’s stop and talk. Urok! If you have a conscience, you shouldn’t kill civilians who aren’t guilty of anything!”

Urok laughed at Nadia, “Conscience? Our conscience isn’t like that.”

As Urok gestured, the orcs picked up their weapons again. The

short cease-fire was over. “Inflicting a painful death or be killed, that is our conscience.”

“.....!”

“The great warrior Karmat, who entered Nuridot, is a madman without a conscience. Kulkukul!”

Urok walked forward. Dark elves aimed arrows from above. However, the arrows were shaking. Their minds were already filled with worry about the rear. The faces of their family overlapped with the orc in front of them.

“Wait!” Nadia shouted.

Crockta looked at her. Their eyes met. Nadia had an apologetic expression on her face. She struggled and bit her lips before eventually declaring her surrender.

“I surrender, so stop the attack on the rear.”

“Hoh.”

“I will surrender.”

“Then drop your weapons.”

“Once the safety of the residents...”

“Then the battle will continue. Listen to the power of weapons.”

The orcs started laughing. They were certain of their victory. The Great Clan had gained dominance by being crueller than anyone else. What they were doing now wasn't a war, but closer to a massacre.

“Everybody...”

The moment that Urok was about to order the attack, Nadia abandoned her weapon.

“.....!”

She looked around at the other dark elves. She didn't say anything, but everybody understood her meaning. One by one, the militia started to discard their weapons. Now the dark elves had no more weapons.

Crockta and Tiyo were the only ones left.

“Isn't this a little unfair?” Tiyo asked.

Crockta shrugged.

“What will you do, Crockta?”

“Hrmm...”

Crockta wondered if he should continue or leave Nuridot and escape. He hadn't thought the dark elves would be so naive.

“Oh, Karmat is coming,” Urok said.

Everyone turned around. A series of orc warriors were coming from the town. Their weapons were bloody. The faces of the dark elves stiffened.

“Don't worry, dark elves. I told him not to kill everyone, so some of your family members will be alive.”

The word 'some' raised hope and despair in them. It made the dark elves more enthusiastic. Now the dark elves were looking at Crockta and Tiyo like they were urging them.

‘Discard your weapon and surrender’ was in their eyes.

Crockta narrowed his eyes. He felt dirty. He couldn't understand their minds, and he didn't like this change of attitude. Tiyo felt the same and raised General even more. They were companions who had fought together. They didn't even need to look at each other to know what they were thinking. Crockta nodded and was about to raise his greatsword.

Then someone said, “Wow, this situation looks absurd.”

It was a carefree voice. Everybody looked back.

The voice spoke again, “What are you looking at, you fucking bastards.”

A dark elf was walking behind the orc warriors coming from the town. The dark elf seemed weak. But the voice wasn't coming from an orc. The orcs' eyes were dead.

“You shouldn't do this to guests you invited to help, you crazy bastards.”

The dark elf stood among the orcs. It was a terrible looking elf with blood coming from his cut ears. The calm voice didn't match the curses that were being spat out. It was an awkward tone that didn't match the threat.

“I'm playing with dogs.”

It was Anor. Somehow, his eyes looked different. He raised a hand and all the orc warriors lifted their weapons. Crockta realized that they were similar to the undead that he saw in Orcrox's dungeon.

Crockta started laughing. He didn't know what was happening,

but,

‘I tried to live well only to be bullied like I was doing something wrong. I am the one suffering, so why do I have to change? Isn’t there something wrong with this?’

The Anor right now seemed better than the one who had once whispered whispered those words.

“You are alive.”

Chapter 87 – Tuna

Urok had an arrow in his neck.

“Kuoh...”

He pressed against the blood welling up from his wound and glared at the enemy. There were three people who interfered with him.

The orc warrior from the continent, Crockta. The gnome soldier who came with Crockta, Tiyo. Then the one who suddenly appeared with the forgotten bloodline of a necromancer, Anor. Without them, Nuridot would've fallen into his hands without any great sacrifices. But the three of them had screwed up everything.

He tried to do a last hurrah with his axe, but his body didn't move. A red tinge could be seen at the edge of his vision. Death was approaching. He felt sure that it was his end. In the end, Urok cursed them in order to see their triumphant expressions fall.

“Great chieftain... come after you.”

However, the reaction he was hoping for didn't come out. Their expressions became more excited like they had been waiting for that to happen. Urok acknowledged his defeat. These people were bolder and stronger than he thought.

He raised his gaze. Crockta's greatsword was covering the sun.

Ahh, that light, the flash of a soldier shining on the battlefield. A dark curtain started to descend from above his head. Urok realized that the darkness was the death that came to meet him. He saw little flashes of light bounce off the edge of the blade.

Thus, he met his end with wide open eyes.

“The end.”

The situation was reversed after Anor appeared. Crockta mercilessly slew the orcs and the orcs he killed were raised again by Anor. The dark elves didn't have to worry about damage to the undead, so they could shoot arrows randomly.

The Great Clan warriors stubbornly threw themselves at the dark elves, but they couldn't reverse the situation. Urok's death was a signal as the orcs started to retreat.

The dark elves cheered at the victory. However, the three men who led the battle to victory weren't pleased.

“Anor.”

Crockta called out to him. Anor reflexively replied, “What crazy bastard called me... ah, Crockta.”

“.....”

It was now his reflex to spit out curses. What was this?

Crockta shrugged. “You seem to have suffered. Are your ears okay?”

“Ah, yes. Well...”

Anor touched the shortened ends of his ears. The ears were shortened, and he no longer looked like a dark elf, but a tanned human. Crockta nodded towards the dark elves.

“They seem to want an explanation.”

Now that the orcs retreated, the dark elves were staring at Anor with loathe and fear-filled eyes..

In the past, Crockta had met a man called Iron who liked wine in Chesswood. He was a necromancer like Anor. It was just like that time. The power to raise the dead always provoked people’s fear.

“Yes.”

Anor straightened his back.

He decided not to care anymore. He cut off his ears in a crisis and the power was liberated.

The fact that selfish dark elves tried to kill him for their own safety and he needed to free the power of the dark elves pointed out the duality of Nuridot. It might be argued that that the worst ones weren't the orcs, but the terrible prejudices of the dark elves.

But Anor decided to abandon all of that. He had been persecuted for his whole life in Nuridot. The dark elves who treated him like that didn't deserve an explanation. There was nothing different.

Anor said with a grin, "What are you looking at, dog scum?"

Ian disconnected. He checked his watch and saw that he had been connected for a long time. Ian felt hungry. What was in the fridge?

"Nothing..."

He opened the refrigerator and found nothing. It was mostly empty. Suddenly, he found an unfamiliar sealed container. A post-it note was attached. The post-it was from Yiyu and the following was written:

–Stop the game and eat. Game loser.

He opened it and found a sandwich. It was a bit out of shape, like she had created it herself. Ian smiled and bit the sandwich, tasting

canned tuna among crunchy greens. The taste was okay.

“Hrmm...”

He recalled the contents of the game as he walked into the living room. This time, he had connected for a long time. Since he played alone in the north where there were no users, he could immerse himself in Elder Lord. For a while, he forgot that he was Jung Ian and really lived like Crockta.

If it hadn't been for the system warning message, he might still have been playing.

“I really am a game loser.”

He checked his phone. There were a few messages from Han Yeori. He had been connected to Elder Lord for so long that he hadn't seen her for a while. Ian decided to visit the cafe. He should do something for the hard-working Han Yeori.

He washed up and headed towards Cafe Reason.

The store was quiet. It was holidays so the number of students decreased. Ian smiled and turned to the counter.

“Have you been well?” Han Yeori's eyes widened as she found Ian. Then she rolled her eyes and chatted to Yoo Sooyeon beside her.

“Sooyeon, do you know what that face is?”

“Boss-nim?”

“No, not the boss. A demon. That is the face of a demon.”

Yoo Sooyeon laughed. It seemed like the two of them had become very close.

“The face of the capitalist demon, who entrusts his store to others and lives a leisurely life.”

“I can hear you.”

“I am saying it so that you can hear,” retorted Han Yeori.

Ian smiled bitterly. He certainly didn’t care for the store, as he only accessed Elder Lord all day long.

“I understand. Should we meet up once you are finished?”

Ian’s words meant he would buy them dinner. Han Yeori quickly replied, “Tuna.”

“.....”

“Expensive tuna.”

Yoo Sooyeon just tilted her head.

“Sooyeon hasn’t eaten proper tuna. Boss-nim will let you try it today. The demon has a conscience.”

She poked fun at Ian as she talked to Yoo Sooyeon. Ian smiled at the scene.

“Okay, I understand.”

“Yes!”

Han Yeori smiled widely. He had a feeling that he would be spending a lot today.

A group of guests entered. As Han Yeori and Yoo Sooyeon took their orders, Ian looked around the cafe. He aligned the chairs, checked the trash and refilled the supplies. Then he sat down in a corner of the cafe. He stared at the interior of Café Reason. Ian became excited as he looked around his store.

He decorated everything according to his own taste.

From his childhood to the battlefield, Ian had lived in environments that he couldn’t choose. He couldn’t do anything as a child and he didn’t have any freedom as a soldier. At best, he was

only given a choice of what type of gun and knife to use.

The first time Ian could think about what he liked was when he came home and set up a café. The work of decorating the store according to his own preferences acted as a rehabilitation that brought he back from his life as a soldier.

From the dark walnut colored tables, the iron chairs that firmly supported the back, pipes that appeared in the steampunk and partitions to create a flow among the guests. He even picked out the font for the menu on the counter. The counter was at a low height for the customers and employees to easily see each other.

“Welcome.”

Han Yeori greeted a customer. Her eyes were welcoming and friendly. Yes, even she was his choice. He liked the lines around her eyes when she smiled.

Suddenly, he caught Han Yeori's eyes. Her eyebrows raised at his expression. Then as soon as a customer stood at the counter, her face changed abruptly as she smiled brightly.

Ian smiled and closed his eyes. He leaned back in the iron chair. That's right. All of this was his choice. Everything in Café Reason was what he liked, and it was his wish to see it for a long time.

[Boss-nim, Unni is wondering about the place? = = =]

The message came from Yoo Sooyeon.

He had first met her on the day that Lenox died. He had gone back to Orcrox and was confused when he ended the connection. He went for an early morning walk and saved her from being bullied.

Her profile picture was of her smiling while standing in Café Reason. In a corner of the screen, Han Yeori's hand in a V sign could also be seen. Well, it was good that they seemed to be getting along. He hadn't asked her any details thus far, but her face had gradually brightened.

[An area near the café. I'll let you know the location later.]

Then Ian added as a joke,

[You should bring some digestives in case there is an accident.]

He hadn't cared for the café lately, so he was planning to feed them properly today. Not long ago, the salary for an Elder Lord ranker was received. It was sufficient.

The support for rankers was a lot bigger than he initially thought. It was huge. There was one more 'o' than what he had been thinking.

“...It is enough to buy the café’s building.”

It was only the first settlement, but it would be enough if he got a loan. Then Ian pictured the face of the good-hearted landlord who occasionally came in for coffee. He might have a lot of money now, but Ian felt uncomfortable crossing a line.

Ian had been worried when the system asked for an account. He knew Ji Hayeon, the successor to the Myeongsong Group.

He had a strange relationship with her due to his military background. It wasn’t hard for her to find information about him. It didn’t matter if she discovered that he was Crockta, but he felt like he wouldn’t be able to enjoy Elder Lord like before if his identity was known.

So when he searched for information, Ian came up with a description of the core system.

The entire funding for rankers was transferred to an account managed by the core system ‘Albino.’ The funds would be transferred to the virtual account created by Albino, and then distributed to the 500 rankers. Once the settlement was over, all the information including the virtual account was deleted.

It was a confidential security system designed for the users who chose to remain private among the rankers. Even the developers of the Elder Lord system weren’t able to browse the personal information.

Ian turned off the chat program and heard a voice near him.

-The Heaven and Earth Clan led by Choi Hansung's 'Rommel' has declared war on the Metatron Clan, which is ranked first on Elder Lord's power ranking. There are some people who see the clan war as a fight between Korean and US users, because the clans are mainly composed of people from these countries.

It was the familiar voice of the Elder Lord Times host. Someone was watching Elder Lord Times on their phone. Ian was also curious about Elder Lord. Ever since he left for the north, he didn't get much news about Elder Lord.

-The Heaven and Earth Clan has recently expanded by interacting closely with the NPCs of Elder Lord. This tactic reminds me of the Thawing Balhae Clan that is now gone. Choi Hansung...

Ian's eyes narrowed. He confirmed the information on Choi Hansung. He had a handsome face and outstanding abilities. He was a person who could play the main character in a movie or drama.

-Choi Hansung is currently ranked second in Elder Lord's rankings. This is the highest number among Koreans. Therefore, his stock has sharply and he received a lot of offers for CFs. (commercials).

-That reminds me, it seems like the 'Choi Hansung Ramen' is

very popular recently. He said that he enjoyed eating this ramen before playing Elder Lord.

The hosts of Elder Lord Times then changed the topic. They introduced various topics about Elder Lord.

The war between the Heaven and Earth Clan and Metatron Clan, the independent user village created by the elf Elaine was enjoying tremendous prosperity and the fact that a new king was crowned as the head of the allied human cities.

There was also a familiar name.

–Organizations following in the footsteps of the Orc of Justice, Crockta, have formed. Recently, I heard that the necromancer Iron has come to the fore as a member of Crockta’s fan club, ‘He’s an Orc, yet still Praiseworthy!’ Players from all over Elder Lord have joined.

–The Rehabilitation Brothers have succeeded in reforming the master of the Et Clan, aka Tiger Mask. This has ended the long battle between the Rehabilitation Brothers and the ET Clan. Let’s listen to the interview.

Ian smiled warmly.

Recently, the number of members in his fan club ‘He’s an Orc, yet still Praiseworthy’ have increased. Youvidser Laney, who became famous due to Crockta, was a member of the fan club and

some celebrities tried to follow the flow by mentioning Crockta.

Everyone was hoping for his return. He would return to the continent with the head of the great chieftain.

“Kulkulkul.”

Ian unconsciously laughed like an orc, before coughing as he felt the gazes towards him. He had recently taken on Crockta’s tone. He needed to be cautious so that Yiyu didn’t notice. He had to be careful.

“Boss-nim.”

Han Yeori and Yoo Sooyeon approached him. Han Yeori grabbed Ian’s sleeve and pulled him up.

“You should think about what to do to raise café sales. You don’t have a sense of crisis at all.”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“Let’s go quickly.”

Yoo Sooyeon was smiling as she watched the scene. Ian laughed.

“I said tuna. No buying something else.” Han Yeori declared.

“Understood.”

“Today has ended. Let’s go, Sooyeon!”

Han Yeori and Yoo Sooyeon left arm in arm. Ian followed them. As he saw Han Yeori’s excitement, someone’s face popped into his head.

If it were him, he would say this.

‘Crockta! Nothing else dot! Tuna dot!’

Ian stopped in his tracks. Would Tiyo know the taste of tuna? Somehow, it seemed like Ian’s boundaries of reality was shaking.

That’s right.

Ian looked at Han Yeori who was beckoning to him. It was the reason why he fought against users in Elder Lord, and wore a headband to get along with NPCs.

“Boss-nim.”

Ian’s pace increased.

There were people who were important to him. They might just

be characters in the game, but they occupied a place in his heart just like the people in front of him. If something happened to Tiyo, he would really be upset.

Suddenly, Yoo Sooyeon hit the shoulder of a passerby. The passerby cursed in a low voice.

Yoo Sooyeon apologized, “Ah, I’m sorry.”

Ian thought as he watched the man pull away. It was an unavoidable instinct to protect his precious ones.

Chapter 88 – The Black Forest (1)

“Thank you again. I won’t forget your help. I will send messengers to Nameragon and Spinoa.”

Nadia’s expression was somewhat disturbed as she spoke. It was due to the dark elf standing with them.

“It is the first time I’m leaving Nuridot. I’m really excited.”

Anor joined Crockta and Tiyo’s party.

He had awakened the power of a necromancer that his mother had left him. At the same time, his identity as a dark elf was thrown away. He released everything that had accumulated in the meantime. A person who gave up being a dark elf, that was Anor.

There was also the tragedy that occurred at the town hall. As he left the hall, he took the orcs that infiltrated the town and turned them into his puppets. However, he deliberately didn’t kill some orc warriors. He left alone through the barrier outside the town.

The surviving orcs once again attacked the town hall. The dark elves had to fight against the orc warriors themselves.

Using the advantage of numbers, they were able to overpower the orcs. However, the fact that the orcs were an elite tribe warriors while the dark elves were people unfamiliar with fighting still held true. Multiple lives were given up in exchange for their

resistance. Countless casualties had occurred.

Anor just shrugged when questioned about this. Perhaps it was a bonus.

Nadia knew that he had been persecuted due to being a dark elf and his dead mother having the bloodline of a necromancer, so she couldn't blame him. She was also complicit. Of course, the other dark elves didn't think so. The object of dislike had turned into hatred. In particular, those who lost family members in the town hall wanted to jump at Anor.

Nadia spoke to Anor, "Anor."

"Well, sh..."

"Take care of yourself."

"Ba... no, no, yes. Well..."

The shock from the hall had been so great that profanity was an automatic reflex.

"Then we will be going. Stay alive. Bul'tar!"

"Take care. Don't discriminate against other species dot!"

Crockta and Tiyo said their final words. Nadia nodded. Anor just nodded instead of saying goodbye. Then they turned around. For the man who had been persecuted for life in Nuridot, this was his first time leaving for the outside world.

Nadia prayed to the gods as she watched them walk away.

The honorable orc, Crockta. The cute but macho Tiyo.

“Anor, is this the first time you’re leaving Nuridot? Kiki, aren’t you a hillbilly?”

“This crazy dwarf...ah no...I’m sorry.”

“Were you going to curse me just then dot?”

“I’m not sure... why do I keep doing this?”

“This bastard! Come here!”

“I-I’m sorry!”

In addition, the dark elf who reflexively cursed, Anor. Nadia could feel that these three were the key to the future of the north. But when she saw Tiyo hitting Anor, she started to become worried about the future of the north.

“God help them.”

And protect our dark elves from the mad chieftain. Nadia once again prayed.

Crockta, Tiyo, and Anor built up a reputation for helping the dark elves in trouble as they headed towards Nameragon. Now the dark elves in the north started to know their names.

“It would be good if Third Dragon was also together with us,” Anor touched his necklace as he spoke.

He had buried Third Dragon at Nuridot Forest. Then he made the necklace out of one of Third Dragon’s teeth.

“By the way, when are we arriving in Nameragon?” Anor asked.

He was a dark elf, but he knew nothing about the geography of the north. Crockta checked on the map.

“We will arrive at Nameragon once we cross this mountain.”

There was a high mountain in front of them. It would take too long to go around. In addition, there was something unique about it.

“If we try to cross this mountain... we’ll have to go through the Black Forest.”

“Black Forest?”

“Yes. There is no explanation about why it is called the Black Forest.”

Crockta checked the map again before putting it away. It was a map of the north that he received from Nadia. It was much more detailed than the previous one. According to the map, it would take a day or two to reach Nameragon.

“The Black Forest?” suddenly asked Anor.

“Why, do you know it dot?”

“I’ve heard about it. It’s said that the Black Forest is dark...”

“Is that it?” Anor adjusted his ears. He looked up at the sky like he was recalling a distant memory. “It’s said that a hermit lives in the Black Forest.”

“A hermit?”

“Yes. He used to appear in the past, but I think he has been hiding lately... I don’t know the details. That is the only thing I remember about the Black Forest.”

Hermit of the Black Forest, it was a very romantic name.

“Won’t it be interesting?”

“That’s right.”

Crockta grinned. In the world of Elder Lord, a new adventure would begin once one ended. The Black Forest was waiting for them.

[It is hard to meet the hermit of the Black Forest.]

The system message resurfaced after a long time. Was there going to be a quest to find the hermit?

[He has a mighty power and is friendly to anyone. If you meet him, you will be able to get his help.]

[The meeting itself is a reward, so there will be no reward for finding him.]

Crockta frowned.

[But I prepared a small quest for your hard work in finding the hermit.]

[The hermit of the Black Forest isn't a human, elf, orc or gnome.]

[If you meet him and please him, you will be given a new skill.]

He didn't understand but there were more reasons to meet the hermit of the Black Forest.

“Heh, another adventure is waiting for me dot. Hey, foul-mouthed person!”

“I'm not a foul-mouthed person!”

“Don't lie.”

“I'm really not...”

“Foul-mouthed person, do you want to make a bet? Who will find the hermit of the Black Forest first dot?!”

Then Tiyo started running towards the mountain, Anor followed after him. Crockta quickly trailed after them. They reached the Black Forest in an instant. And at the very beginning of the forest...

They met an ogre.

“...Heok, heok.” Tiyo was catching his breath from running up

the steep mountain. A gigantic mass was sitting in front of them. Tiyo started trembling. “Wow, is that guy the hermit?”

“I-I’m not sure.”

The message window said that the hermit of the Black Forest wasn’t a human, elf, gnome, or orc. If so, maybe he was an ogre. The ogre was doing something. It slowly turned its head. There was blood around the ogre’s mouth.

“Grrr.”

The eyes of the ogre became ferocious as it found its targets.

“It doesn’t seem like it dot.”

The ogre got up, with the body of the bear it had been eating was at its feet. In the real world, bears were dominant predators but in the world of Elder Lord, they were just snacks for ogres.

Crockta pulled out his greatsword. Anor was still reluctant to use the power of a necromancer, so he was forced to step behind.

“Anor, please step back. I am going to solve this.”

“Is it okay?”

Crockta smiled instead of answering. Of course, the ogre was a powerful monster. Organized troops were required to defeat it. Crockta had met a group of ogres at Quantas and had barely defeated them with the support of the gnomes garrison.

But now it was different. Crockta was no longer an ordinary warrior.

“Huhu, Crockta’s abilities can’t be ignored.”

Tiyo folded his arms and settled in to watch Crockta fight. Crockta prided himself on his skills and lifted the greatsword.

The ogre approached Crockta with a distorted face. The ground shook wildly with every step. This was the power of an ogre. However, it wouldn’t be a big battle. Now his greatsword could be freely manipulated as it headed towards the ogre.

Take a look, Black Forest. Hermit of the Black Forest. His greatsword would kill this ogre, just like its name. No one could stop him!

“Bul’tarrrr!”

Crockta ran forward The ogre’s fist flew. Crockta grinned. And...

He was hit by the fist.

“Cough!”

Crockta flew through the air towards the spot where he had jumped.

Cheolbudok!

It was a psychological shock, as well as a physical one. Crockta couldn't stand up for a while.

Tiyo sighed, “Should I be laughing or worried...?”

Crockta curled up from the pain caused by those words.

“Grrr...”

The ogre was approaching them. Tiyo lifted General. Crockta got back up. He raised his hand to stop Tiyo.

“This is my fight.”

“Are you okay dot?”

“I just made a mistake.”

Crockta once again raised Ogre Slayer. This was a fight for his pride. Crockta vowed to end the ogre as he rushed forward. The

ogre grabbed a club and confronted Crockta. The two weapons met. It was a tremendous force.

Crockta pretended to lure the ogre into a power struggle, then turned to destroy the ogre's balance. Then he stabbed into a gap.

“Kuweeeoooh!”

However, the ogre's kick was also heading towards Crockta's abdomen. It was a quick reaction rate. Crockta's sword sliced the ogre's side while the ogre kicked Crockta's abdomen. Both of them stepped back at the same time.

“...Hoo.”

Crockta raised his greatsword.

This ogre was different from the ones he met before. The movements were fast and contained techniques. It was much more efficient than the ogres who only fought ignorantly with strength. It was like an ogre who learned martial arts.

Crockta's eyes became cautious. It was also the same for the ogre. It thought of Crockta as a plain orc, but it realized that this orc was different from the others. The strength and skills exceeded the orcs that it knew.

Furthermore, the orc cut its skin. It meant that the orc's swordsmanship had at least reached the pinnacle level.

The two look at each other and laughed. They had met a rival here.

“How interesting.”

“Grrr...”

The two collided again.

The blade swept past the nose. The club slid over the head. Both of their attacks missed each other by a hair. If Crockta tried to cut the neck, the club would aim for the abdomen. If he tried to stab the leg, the club would aim for his head. The fierce fighting continued.

He hadn't expected to have such a high-level confrontation with an ogre.

Crockta grinned. The ogre also smiled. Then they wielded their weapons towards each other again.

Leyteno's Greatsword Technique passed by the club, the tip of the sword moving like a snake. It was a movement difficult to imagine for a greatsword. Its target was the heart of the ogre.

“.....!”

The ogre also showed unpredictable movements for its size. It twisted its body and avoided the tip of the sword. It lifted a hand from the club and swung it at Crockta. An unexpected blow. At that moment, Crockta moved his greatsword.

He grabbed the ogre's massive arm and pulled it. He used inertia to throw the ogre's body. The ogre lost its balance and fell due to Crockta.

“Ohhhhhhhh!”

The giant ogre that was double Crockta's size. Crockta threw the huge body down.

Kuuong!

Due to the big size, the ogre's head immediately bumped against the ground. It was also against hard rocks. Blood spilled from the ogre's head and it lost consciousness.

Crockta took a deep breath.

“Hoo...”

Then he raised his right hand. A posture of victory.

Tiyo and Anor clapped.

“It was a tremendous battle and that ogre is very good dot.”

“It was incredible. Furthermore, you won against an ogre!”

Crockta held Ogre Slayer. Then he looked down at the unconscious ogre.

“.....”

Crockta placed Ogre Slayer on his back.

“Just go.” For some reason, he didn’t want to kill this ogre.

Tiyo nodded in agreement at the manly sensibility. “Huhu, he felt it.”

“Felt what?” Anor was confused. Tiyo slapped Anor’s back and said, “A man’s sympathy dot.”

Anor was confused. Tiyo clicked his tongue at Anor’s expression.

“You won’t understand...”

At that moment, Anor was filled with the desire to curse Tiyo.

“You, you just wanted to curse, right? Isn’t that right? Isn’t it?”

“...No.”

“You are an elf with a double personality!”

“Ah, no!”

“Ehehe. Try swearing. Where is it? Try it dot!”

“Shit...”

They left the ogre and headed deeper into the Black Forest. This time they met a goblin.

“.....?”

The goblin was sitting on a rock with a zen-like expression. Crockta’s group stopped and the goblin slowly opened his eyes. His eyes were filled with giddiness.

“Kieeeeek.”

The goblin rose from his spot. A short bow was held in his hand. He loaded an arrow and aimed it at Crockta.

“...It is my turn dot.”

Tiyo stepped forward, holding General in his hands. The goblin and gnome's eyes met.

Tiyo cried out, "This forest, it is interesting!"

Tiyo raised General. At that moment, the goblin's arrow flew towards Tiyo's head. Tiyo avoided the attack by rolling on the floor. Then he immediately retaliated. General's bullets flew towards the goblin.

His target was the goblin's head. However, the goblin just moved his head and avoided the attack.

"Ah...!"

The goblin grinned and said, "It is still insufficient."

".....!"

"You have no heart in your attack kyak."

It was a goblin who knew how to speak the human language like Kyawak who Crockta met in the past.

"Don't make me laugh!"

Tiyo fired General again. But the goblin just used minimal

movements to avoid the bullets. Splendid rays of light filled the Black Forest.

“A real shooter doesn’t fire like that.” The goblin pulled back his bowstring. His short bow trembled as it was pulled back to the fullest extent. The goblin’s arrow aimed exactly at Tiyo.

“This is heart kyak!”

The arrow was shot and a storm appeared.

Chapter 89 – The Black Forest (2)

An unbelievable storm of light struck. At the center of the storm was a furious arrow.

“Waaaaah!”

Tiyo barely avoided the arrow but he fell into the forest in the aftermath of the storm. The whirlwind swept the spot where Tiyo had been standing. Tiyo lay down in the collapsed wreckage of the forest.

Crockta and Anor froze.

“Tiyo!”

Tiyo was lying down like he was dead. His fingertips moved. His eyelids shook before he slowly opened his eyes. Tiyo staggered as he raised his body. He was still holding onto General tightly.

“Don’t interfere dot...”

Tiyo glared at the goblin. The goblin still had a relaxed expression on his face. Rather, this time he raised a hand like he was yielding. It provoked Tiyo.

“You might be confident but I am a gnome soldier from Quantas.”

Tiyo aimed General's muzzle.

"You will regret the day you upset me dot."

But the goblin didn't care. He just laughed at Tiyo. The ridiculing smile of the goblin further stimulated Tiyo. The goblin frowned and said to Tiyo.

"Let's go, garrison gnome, I'll make you regret it kyak! Don't just talk with your mouth kyahahak!"

"This bastard!"

Tiyo rushed forward and fired General. It was an assault meant to contain the enemy while he approached. But the goblin didn't allow him to get closer. It was like teleportation as the goblin moved backward, sideways and even over some trees. Every time Tiyo's barrage stopped, the goblin fired an arrow.

Tiyo avoided any fatal shots but the arrows tore his skin. The number of wounds gradually increased.

"Kuock..."

Tiyo stared at the wound on his arm with wild eyes.

"I have to acknowledge your confidence despite your lack of skills

kyahahak!”

“.....!”

“Your shooting skills are the worst kyak!”

Tiyo’s hands shook. He was the best shooter in Quantas. He had been recognized as the best every time he fired. Yet this goblin was hurting his pride.

Tiyo nodded. “Okay, Goblin.”

He moved his feet until they were shoulder width apart and stood firmly on the ground.

“Let me give you a taste of my shooting dot.”

“It is in vain kyak!”

Tiyo’s General aimed at the goblins. The goblin also aimed at Tiyo with his arrow.

“Never interfere dot...!”

The situation had become worse than he thought so Crockta had tried to intervene with his greatsword. However, Tiyo had a determined expression on his face. Crockta was forced to take a

step back.

Suddenly, the wind blew. The Black Forest shook. The wind twisted the branches. The leaves fell to the floor. The leaves fell down between Tiyo and the goblin. Like a joke of fate, the leaves passed through the point where they were aiming. The moment that their view of each other was blocked...

The arrows and bullets fired towards each other.

Susususuk.

Shyaaaaaah!

At the same time, the goblin and Tiyo's body twisted. The arrow narrowly passed by Tiyo's cheek. The magic bullet passed by the goblin's side and broke the tree.

“.....!”

None of his bullets touched the goblin. The goblin laughed and did a thumbs down towards Tiyo.

“This is the difference between you and me kyak.”

The goblin laughed. At that moment.

Jeeek.

The tree that Tiyo's magic bullet broke started to tilt slowly. The tree cast a shadow over the goblin. The goblin's face stiffened.

Tiyo said. "Goblin, you might have learned the official language but..."

Tiyo imitated the goblin's actions by lowering his thumb. At the same time, the tree slammed into the goblin.

"It seems like you haven't learned physics dot."

The goblin moaned as it was crushed by the tree.

They passed through the Black Forest and met many monsters.

There was an ogre who learned martial arts, the goblin archer was followed by a lich who summoned skeleton warriors, there was a troll that skillfully wielded a giant axe, a ninja direwolf who struck in the darkness and a lizardman who used a spear. They had to deal with all types of enemies.

All of them weren't ordinary monsters. They all had unique skills, like specialists pursuing their own roads.

“The Black Forest is a really strange place...” muttered Tiyo.

He had just knocked out a kobold archer. The kobold was a bipedal creature with the head of a dog, and it hid in various parts of the forest and fired at them before hiding again. One would be okay, but there were many of them.

Tiyo used his sophisticated shooting to hit the real one and the illusions. In the end, the kobold had admitted defeat after being hit and collapsing.

“Doesn’t it seem like we’re being tested dot?”

The level of the creatures kept increasing.

“What type of hermit is living in a place like the Black Forest?”

“Be careful. It’s time for new enemies to emerge.”

“Uhh...I’m scared.”

They had walked for a long time after suppressing the kobold. According to the pattern, it was time for someone new to appear and stop them. What type of enemy would it be this time? They felt a mix of expectations and tiredness. They moved slowly through the forest.

An unfamiliar landscape appeared in front of them.

“You came up to here.”

A young man was sitting in a rocking chair and reading a book. He glanced at Crockta’s party over his spectacles. It was a young man with pitch black hair.

“It has been a long time since I’ve had visitors.”

At first, his appearance looked like an elf, but this man had a face that was a level higher than that. He put away his book and rose from his seat. A beautiful man.

He placed the book on his chest and said, “Then I will ask a question.”

Crockta’s groups looked at each other at the sudden words. He continued speaking.

“I had a dream a long time ago.”

“.....?”

It was suddenly a story about a dream. They were silent as they listened to the man’s voice.

“In the dream, I was a father with a son. He was a lovely son, and I felt like I could give everything in the world for him. Then one

day, I found out that my child was sick. He was struck with a terminal illness that would slowly but surely lead to his death.”

His face and voice were calm.

“It was such a scary disease that I thought it was a ‘promised death’. My child’s death was promised and no one could avoid it. It was the worst illness that caused terrible pain that no one could bear. That’s why I decided. Rather than let my son die in agony, it was better for me to end his life.”

The man closed his eyes.

“But when I talked about this, everybody called me crazy. This was because there were few people who know about the ‘promised death.’ I said everything was for my child, but they didn’t listen to me and exiled me so that I couldn’t see my son. It was a thorough isolation. Now I will ask.”

They couldn’t figure out what he would ask. Crockta listened closely.

The man asked, “What do you think about me in the dream?”

It was a comprehensive question. He didn’t ask if what he thought was right or wrong, but wondered what they thought about him. Crockta touched his chin. It felt like a test, just like the fights they encountered as they passed through the Black Forest. If so, was this man the hermit of the Black Forest and was this the

ultimate test?

The first one to answer was Anor. “It is too much. Even if your child is sick... what if your child wants to live for longer? Wanting to kill...maybe talk to your child...”

“A child wouldn’t understand what the ‘promised death’ is. Wouldn’t it be wrong to cause him pain just because of the future?”

“What about the child? Even if it is painful, the child could want to live more...”

“A child wouldn’t understand it.”

“What...”

“How terrible the pain is.”

“.....”

“Is that the end of your answer?”

Anor wasn’t able to say anything more and closed his mouth.

Tiyo replied next, “You are foolish in your dream dot!”

“Why?”

“Anyway, life is about being alone! If there is the promised death, that is your son’s share. You don’t need to kill him. Besides, killing the child is simply futilely meddling in his fate!”

“Hrmm, is it like that?”

“That’s right dot.”

“You don’t understand the dream.”

“What are you saying dot!”

“My son fell in the water. If the child drowns, will you let that be the child’s share?”

“That is a different story dot!”

“It is the same story.”

Tiyo moaned and shook his head. The man started mumbling to himself.

Now it was Crockta’s turn. The hermit of the Black Forest looked at Crockta. He seemed to be waiting for the next answer. Crockta thought carefully.

The promised death. Somehow, it was a familiar notion. It was similar to what he heard from the desperate demon sleeping at his waist and the orc's story about the nameless god. The dream that the man was talking about felt like a dream.

Those who were desperate always had the same reason.

“It was scary.”

Crockta spoke up. The hermit of the Black Forest shook his head.

“No, the child didn't understand it.”

“Not the child.”

Crockta looked at the hermit of the Black Forest. It was an emotionless face where no feelings could be found. Like a doll. Within the dark eyes that didn't show any contrast, was there a human mind that he could sympathize with?

“You were scared.”

At that moment, the hermit's face seemed to shake. But then his face became still again.

Crockta continued speaking, “In a world where you can't understand the promised death, you were struggling with fear

when you discovered your child's ending."

"....."

"You trembled with fear as you understood the true reality, and spent many nights before making the tragic decision for your child." Crockta closed his eyes. "Just you."

He was a soldier fighting on the front lines. Therefore, he often went to a counselor to have his mental state checked. In the process, it was easy to know their consultation strategy. There was the first step that the counselor had to take when dealing with clients. It was to build up rapport! The building of mutual trust through empathy!

Crockta said with tearful eyes, "You must've been very lonely. Really..."

Then Crockta squinted at the hermit's expression. The hermit of the Black Forest's face didn't change.

Damn, it was a failure. The moment that Crockta was about to modify his strategy,

Churuk!

A tear flowed from the hermit's eyes.

“.....!”

The expression still looked like ice but tears were flowing down from both eyes. He realized the change and stuttered.

“Ah...”

He caught a teardrop with his fingertips and stared at it. He was still expressionless, but he somehow gave off a lonely feeling.

His eyes turned to Crockta again. Crockta felt like an intense scorer who broke past the goalkeeper and finished the game smoothly.

“I also can’t understand the promised death. But I can see that you had to make a really lonely and painful decision in your dream. I am really sorry.”

Then he stared up at the sky. It was great directing.

The hermit stared at Crockta’s face. Then he opened his mouth.
“Yes.”

He waved his hand over his face and it became clean. It was magic.

“It would have been really painful and lonely.”

The corners of the hermit's mouth slowly went up. It was a beautiful smile.

“I'm glad to know you.”

He clapped and the landscape changed. Crockta's party was petrified. The scenery in front of them was no longer the forest. It was a huge castle.

“My name is Gushantimur. Travelers, welcome to my lair.”

“...Oh my god.”

[Oh my god.]

The system was also filled with admiration.

[I pay my respects to you, the one who has melted the heart of the cool beauty, the black dragon Gushantimur!]

Chapter 90 – The Black Forest (3)

[Unknown mysterious skill (??? rating) has been obtained.]

[It can only be used after leaving Gushantimur's lair.]

The system didn't give him the skill name. It was pending until he left the lair.

“Defeating my guardians was a great feat. Most people give up and run away in the middle,” said Gushantimur

He had felt the terrible power of Gushantimur after the real landscape of this place was revealed. It was a dragon's majesty that would cause someone to tremble in fear just being in its presence.

“You're a dragon?” asked Anor.

The strong magic that changed the landscape in an instant, the terms 'lair' and 'guardians' and the fearful atmosphere truly matched the characteristics of a dragon.

Gushantimur nodded. “That's right. You, who has the blood of a necromancer.”

“.....!”

“A necromancer contained the ancient lineage of a god. I have never seen such a thick concentration in the blood for many years.”

Gushantimur raised a hand to his face. It was the face of a young man, but there was a sense of longevity about him. Gushantimur grinned.

“You should be proud.”

Anor’s eyes widened. It was a shameful power that he had covered up for all his life. Those who could raise the dead were often a target of fear for other people. Even his mother had given up the bloodline and sealed it.

However, this mighty dragon said to be proud of it.

“The power to connect the dead to this world isn’t within the strength of a mortal. But an old god who is troubled by those who suffer due to eternal parting has given you strength. This is the mercy and blessing of a god.”

“Ah...” Anor scratched his head. He had never heard such a compliment and didn’t know how to respond. He just bowed with a red face. “Thank you.”

“But it is lacking.”

“Huh?”

“The most you can do now is raise bodies and learn to control them. You haven’t reached true necromancy.”

“.....!”

This time Gushantimur’s eyes headed towards Tiyo.

“Tiyo, brave son of the gnome, Hedor.”

Tiyo’s eyes widened. “You know my father?”

“You are lacking compared to your father.”

“.....!”

The dragon not only knew Tiyo’s father’s name, but also said that Tiyo was lacking compared to him. It was as if he knew Tiyo’s father well.

“The artifact that you are using has no limit on its power. But you have already set a limit in your heart.”

“What are you saying dot!”

“General is a Dragon Light General, a god’s weapon created by

the gold dragon Abogullad.”

“A dragon’s weapon?”

“That’s right. Raise your own vessel”

Tiyo staggered like he was shocked. “M-My vessel is small dot...”

He had lived as a macho person. Everybody praised him as a man with large vessel. But the black dragon pointed out his vessel.

“General’s true name is ‘Dragonslayer’.”

“.....!”

“It is a dragon weapon designed to kill dragons. But you can’t catch an ogre with it, let alone a dragon.”

Tiyo flopped down. His eyes shook wildly.

Gushantimur’s eyes now turned towards Crockta. Crockta prepared himself. The system said that the meeting itself was a reward. Gushantimur might’ve seemed stricken at first, but he had given them important facts that would eventually become a foundation for their growth. Those who didn’t listen to him wouldn’t grow further.

Crockta faced Gushantimur and waited for what he would point out. Gushantimur opened his mouth, “Wonderful.”

“.....!”

“Keep trying hard. More than this.”

Crockta grabbed Gushantimur who was turning around. “Excuse me, point out something.”

“There is nothing.”

“Don’t lie.”

“...It is okay?”

“Yes. Please point out what I am lacking. Unreservedly!”

“Hmm, if you want...”

This dragon was a surprisingly good person. He gazed at Crockta coolly and opened his mouth. “You have reached the Pinnacle level.”

“That’s accurate.”

Pinnacle! It had been Crockta’s target ever since Hoyt had first

showed it to him. It was an area he had barely reached after defeating the behemoth. It was difficult at first but he gradually got used to it. Now all of Crockta's movements contained the enlightenment of the Pinnacle.

“Look beyond that.”

Crockta's eyes widened. As the name implied, he thought Pinnacle was the end. The power of the Pinnacle was enough to defeat most enemies, but there was more beyond that?

The mentors who taught Crockta were Lenox, Hoyt and Baek Hanho. And they had only mentioned the Pinnacle. There might be high and low abilities in that area, but none of them had seen beyond it.

It was fairly unexplored.

“The Pinnacle state is to become one with the world.” Gushantimur said, “But beyond that, there is an area where you can wield the world.”

“.....!”

“That is your goal.”

Crockta's body trembled in anticipation. He wanted to swing his sword straight away. Move the world according to his own will. Was that even possible?

“What is it called?”

“That...” Gushantimur grinned. “The people who managed to do it, they were all lauded as Heroes.”

Hero rating!

The Despairing Demon’s Mouth belt that he was wearing was also a Hero rank item. At the time, the power of the demon was terrifying. If he hadn’t convinced the demon then Quantas would’ve disappeared from the map.

It was possible for individuals to have such a mighty power. The next step after Pinnacle was the Hero rating.

“I didn’t think you would be able to beat all my guardians. But in the end, we all have endless possibilities for growth,” said Gushantimur

Then the doors of the castle opened.

“.....!”

The creatures they beat were gathered there.

The ogre who cornered Crockta with martial arts, the goblin archer who played with Tiyo, the lich who showed a higher level of

undead magic than Anor, the axe-wielding troop and lizardman spearman, the direwolf who attacked them like a ninja and the kobold archer were all gathered there.

“Grrr.”

The ogre discovered Crockta and raised a thumb. Crockta also responded with his thumb. The ogre had a bandage wrapped around its head.

“T-that guy...”

Tiyo pointed at the goblin. The goblin wearing a splint sat down on the ground. He found Tiyo and made a cutting motion across his neck. He would finish Tiyo next time!

“My guardians are all those aiming for a higher world.”

The black dragon Gushantimur liked to stay in this forest and help others grow. But that didn’t mean everyone could get his help. They had to pass the test of his guardians. And the guardians would gradually build up their levels from the test.

“How about it, Travelers?” asked Gushantimur.

“Won’t you knock down the wall that you see here?”

It was a sweet seduction. The guardians were staring at them, as

if daring them to come.

“In fact, the truly strong ones were considerate towards you.”

Beyond the guardians was a huge cyclops. He looked at Crockta and laughed. Then he stroked the head of the ogre that Crockta defeated.

“.....!”

Crockta’s eyebrows twitched.

“Are you confident to beat them with your strength?”

Crockta looked at Tiyo and Anor in turn. The reactions of the two were different. Tiyo’s eyes were burning with fighting spirit. Anor slightly shook his head with a frightened expression.

Tiyo said, “You must be scared dot.”

Anor reflexively replied, “No, you jerk!”

“Then let’s go.”

“Ah...ah?”

Tiyo pushed Anor. Crockta followed behind them. They entered

the lair of the dragon Gushantimur.

Gushantimur's castle was magnificent. Who could imagine that such a huge castle would be hidden in the forest? It was an area hidden by magic, just like Shakan's fortress. As expected from a dragon's lair, it contained gold and silver.

"I once lived in a cave like any other dragon."

Gushantimur explained as he guided them, "But I realized after experiencing an incident. The real treasure isn't gold but friends."

".....!"

The words that old men always said when they became drunk!

'Friends are treasure.'

But he couldn't help being convinced as he gazed at the young beauty against the backdrop of the wonderful castle.

"So I made a castle using gold and treasures. I became friends with those seeking enlightenment after reaching the limit. One or two visited me, and the number of friends gradually increased."

There were weapons everywhere in his castle. And the creatures were polishing and sharpening their skills.

“Why are there no humans, elves, or orcs?”

“Everybody left.” There was no change in Gushantimur’s face, but Crockta thought he somehow looked lonely. “All of them left after achieving a certain level in order to gain wealth and honor. But these guys are different.”

“.....”

“If they go outside, they might be hunted as unusual monsters. They have no place to go. They have transcended the limits of their species and wish to seek a larger world, but that world only despises them as creatures. They have already tasted the wider world and can’t be satisfied with hunting and looting like their people, so there is no place for them to go.”

Gushantimur laughed calmly.

“I will keep them with me until the day they can be recognized. They will never betray me and I will also never betray them.”

Crockta realized something. This dragon wasn’t just a dragon. He was a hot-blooded dragon. Who could call this man a cold-blooded reptile?

“Gushantimur, we won’t stay here for a long time.”

“I guessed so.”

“But we want to be your friend.”

Gushantimur burst out laughing. His laughter was clear.

“Crockta, you are saying strange things.”

“What...”

“Aren’t we already friends?”

“.....!”

Warm. This man, he was warmer than Crockta expected. They were already friends with this warm man.

Crockta nodded.

“Now, my friends are waiting for you. Unpack and come out.”

Crockta’s group unpacked their belongings in the room that Gushantimur guided them to. Then they immediately went outside while armed. Outside, spars were already in full swing.

“Come.”

Gushantimur was standing there after changing his clothing. He was dressed in clothes that allowed easy movement. When they first met, he seemed like a scholar or magician. But a sharp momentum was coming from him now that he was holding a sword.

“Anor, you should learn from this friend.”

It was the bony lich. It laughed.

“Hiik..!”

“Your biggest problem as a necromancer is your timid nature.” Anor was speechless as the lich placed an arm around his shoulder. The skull was terrifying for him. “Become friends with death.”

“Kelkelkel! Do you trust me? Kelkelkel!”

“Aack!”

Anor moaned at the lich’s laugh. Thus, Anor was dragged away by the lich. The skeletons followed them.

Now it was Tiyo’s turn.

“Tiyo.”

“Um.”

“Your weakness is your small vessel.”

“What?” declared Tiyo.

He seemed to have recovered from being told that he had a small vessel.

“What are you saying dot! I am a man who never had a reputation for being small dot! This is the first time I’ve heard that my vessel is small. It really is the first time. Hahaha, how funny dot. A person with a strange dream is calling me small dot! I am someone who received 500 medals dot! Take back what you just said! I’m not small! I am Tiyo who joined the Quantas garrison since I was young...!”

Gushantimur looked at Crockta. Crockta nodded.

“Isn’t it accurate?”

“It’s accurate.”

“Don’t agree with him Crockta!”

Gushantimur coughed.

“Cough, well there seems to be a misunderstanding. The thing I am talking about isn’t your nature. Well, now that I see your personality...”

“What dot?”

“Don’t worry. In any case, the small vessel is your imagination. Lend me General for a moment.”

Tiyo handed General over to Gushantimur with a sour face. Gushantimur held General. At that moment,

“.....!”

General changed. General was in the form of a long rifle, but then the muzzle widened, the column expanded and it took the appearance of a bigger weapon. It was like a cannon.

“T-this is.....”

“General is as strong as your imagination and willpower.”

Then Gushantimur aimed the muzzle towards the air and pulled the trigger. The magic power around General was sucked in fiercely. A light emerged from the barrel and a mass of energy was fired.

Roaaaaar!

The magic shell flew into the sky. Then the light flashed and there was a huge explosion.

Kwaang!

The colorful magic power in the sky looked like fireworks.

“Unbelievable...”

Tiyo had been using General for a long time, so he couldn't help staring with a frozen expression.

“T-this is...”

“This is the true power of the weapon. The Light Dragon General is incomparably powerful when I use it.”

General reverted back to the form of a rifle.

“Here.”

“I-I will do that guise again. I will make an even better cannon! Amazing dot!”

“It is up to you. Tiyo.”

“Ohhh!”

Tiyo took the rifle and examined it. However, General looked exactly the same as before.

“The one who will teach you is the great goblin, Kiao.”

“You finally came kyakk!” It was the goblin that showed Tiyo the storm archery. Kaio walked forward with his short bow.

“I already defeated that guy dot!”

“Tiyo. Take a look at Kiao.”

“What?”

Kiao shrugged.

“Shooting the tree and knocking him out is praiseworthy. Indeed, it is the move of a soldier used to actual fighting. But if Kiao had used his true strength, you wouldn’t be standing here.” Gushantimur declared. “If he really fired the arrow with all his strength, your body would’ve disappeared in that spatiotemporal storm without a trace.”

“.....!”

A spatiotemporal storm! Tiyo couldn't refute it. Certainly, the goblin had the power to create a storm with his bow and arrow. But creating a spatiotemporal storm!

“Kiao is also a great mentor. His power will help with General. Learn well.”

Kiao giggled and poked Tiyo. “Let's go kyak! Harsh training awaits kyaak!”

“Ohh... this bastard...”

“Call me Master, kyak!”

“Shut up Goblin! Teach me properly dot!”

“Kyak kyak kyak, you are a cheeky disciple!”

Now Crockta was left alone. Gushantimur's eyes headed towards Crockta. He raised his sword.

“...Heh.”

Crockta grinned. He was expected it when he saw Gushantimur holding the sword. The black dragon Gushantimur would teach

Crockta himself. Fighting spirit rose in Crockta's chest. The opponent was a dragon. Could he cross blades with this opponent?

“Gushantimur. The name of my sword is Ogre Slayer.”

“A great sword.”

“But I might change the name today.” Crockta pulled out his greatsword. Ogre Slayer cried out like it had been waiting. “Into Dragon Slayer.”

A remark meant to provoke the dragon!

Gushantimur laughed. Then something flowed down.

“.....!”

Crockta trembled. Gushantimur smiled but his sword tip was touching Crockta's neck. It was a stab wound. He hadn't even noticed until a drop of warm blood flowed from his neck.

Gushantimur said, “First hit.”

Crockta couldn't help smiling. He couldn't imagine how many times he would die today.

Chapter 91 – The Black Forest (4)

Crockta once again raised his body. Gushantimur declared, “1980.”

“...Hoo, hoo. Again.”

Crockta’s face was dripping with sweat. He was too tired to move. Every joint in his body was screaming. His neck was stiff from tension after being lightly cut by Gushantimur’s sword.

“Didn’t you say you would change your weapon into ‘Dragon Slayer’? Did you give up already?”

“Not yet!”

Crockta focused his mind. Ogre Slayer rose up and entered the realm of Pinnacle. He became one with the world. Time became slower. He woke up the laws of the world with his sword. He swung his greatsword with the desire to cut the enemy.

Gushantimur’s sword swung towards him. In this slow world, their hearts collided with each other. All types of sword roots existed in this world and they ran among them. The last thing left in the end was to unfold their swords.

“.....!”

As a natural consequence after the fighting ended, Crockta's sword flew in the air while Gushantimur's sword was pointed at Crockta's chest. An overwhelming defeat with no excuses!

"1981," said Gushantimur.

Crockta had died nearly 2,000 times today. Crockta took deep breaths. He recovered from his defeat. Looking back, he didn't know how he should've responded. So instead of thinking, he raised the greatsword.

"Again."

The other practitioners watched Crockta's limitless spirit with admiration. In particular, the ogre who first competed with Crockta admired Crockta's fighting spirit as he raised his fist.

There was no change in Gushantimur's expression. He just silently raised his sword. There wasn't a single drop of sweat on his body. He was a dragon but also an amazing swordsman. Crockta couldn't imagine how strong Gushantimur would be if he was turned into a god.

It provoked a desire to win rather than awe.

In the world of Elder Lord, he was able to endlessly renew his limits. He was an orc knocking down an ogre with a sword. It was the same for Shakan hunting the behemoth. He knocked down a strong monster with a bow.

Crockta was convinced that he could defeat Gushantimur.

“1982.”

“Kuock...”

He spent time and effort. Yet it was insufficient.

“Again.” Crockta raised his limp legs.

He knew the importance of repetition in training. It might be sufficient to kill the enemy with one hit, but that one strike required thousands of sunrises and sunsets. The one who wielded the sword one thousand times would win over someone who only wielded it once.

Gushantimur said, “It is up to here.”

“Not yet.”

“You will.” Gushantimur put the sword away. “I can’t fight anymore.”

“You look fine.”

“I’m hungry.” Gushantimur said with a cold look, “The most

important thing in training is rest and diet.”

His advice was like the remark of a gym trainer; but it was reasonable, so Crockta nodded.

In no time, the sun was going down. The sunset at the horizon burned the sky. It was a beautiful twilight.

The other practitioners also returned to the castle. In the distance, Tiyo and the goblin were hitting each other.

Crockta arrived at the banquet room with Gushantimur. There was a long dining table with seats set up. Gushantimur sat down with Crockta, Tiyo, and Anor seated close to him. The chandelier in the banquet room scattered light like a waterfall. The fragmented light scattered over the food in the banquet hall, making them look more appetizing.

“Good food dot.”

“It is the work of my lizardman friend, a gourmet.”

Tiyo wrapped a napkin around his neck and imitated the manners of a gentleman. He ate a piece of meat and closed his eyes.

“Wow. What dish is this? The flavor is deep and so good.”

“It is gnome meat.”

“.....!”

Tiyo spat the meat out and glared at Gushantimur's face. Gushantimur placed the meat in his mouth without changing his expression.

“A joke. It is beef.”

“This bastard... saying such awful things with a serious face...!” Tiyo paused for a moment. He rolled his eyes before suddenly laughing, “Hahahat! I see! Nice joke dot! Hahahat!”

Tiyo suddenly changed his stance. “It's a joke, but it isn't bad for this big Tiyo. Hahahat!”

Crockta realized that Tiyo was acting as someone with a big vessel. Tiyo spread his mouth wide open, poured the dish in, and swallowed it in one gulp. Gushantimur said, “You have a really large vessel.”

“Hahat! That's right! You don't need to be surprised dot! I am a gnome with a big vessel!”

Tiyo shook his shoulders.

“.....”

Crockta was thrilled. He once again gained enlightenment. The man who seemed cold could easily praise his opponent.

Truly, life was unpredictable. It wasn't what he expected and he had a whole new perspective. All of these things were cutting him into a tough man. It wasn't just Tiyo or Gushantimur. In the history of their lives, they were shaped by these things.

“.....!”

That's right.

Everything in the world went back to causation. In the world, there was no effect without a cause.

Crockta suddenly looked at his fork. The chandelier light was reflecting over the sharp edges. The light dropping from the chandelier. That light came from a lamp that illuminated the inside. Crockta wielded his fork.

The world slowed. Crockta used the Pinnacle to pursue the piece of steak on Gushantimur's plate. Before, he used the power of Pinnacle by calculating the 'result'. But now he started to calculate the 'process' for defeating the enemy.

It was through inner reason, strong will and imagination!

The fork contained his enlightenment.

“.....”

Gushantimur also defended with his fork.

The two forks crossed each other's plates. In this environment, Crockta went through many possibilities in his imagination, from taking away Gushantimur's steak, having his own stolen, sometimes making a mistake or maybe breaking each other's forks.

Then he placed his willpower into it. He twisted causation.

‘The Pinnacle state is to become one with the world.’

Crockta recalled Gushantimur's words, ‘But beyond that, there is an area where you can wield the world.’

The world convulsed. Suddenly, the steak was hanging from Crockta's fork. Gushantimur's fork stopped in the air. Crockta had robbed him of his steak.

“This...”

At that moment, Crockta obtained a clue to reach Hero rank. Beginning from small things to change the world, just like a butterfly's wings. This was the Hero territory.

“Kulkulkul!”

Now he wanted to swing his sword. Crockta laughed in a pleased way. “Gushantimur!”

“Um.” Gushantimur had a stern expression. “If it is so delicious, you could’ve just asked for more.”

“.....!” Crockta denied it. “There is a misunderstanding...!”

Tiyo clicked his tongue. “No matter how hungry you are, it isn’t polite to covet another person’s food Crockta!”

“T-That isn’t it.”

But all the eyes around him were cold.

“Orc friend, kyak! You have learned the wrong manners kyaak!”

Even the goblin pointed out his manners. The ogre had a disappointed expression on its face. Public opinion was already against him. Crockta tried to protest but closed his mouth when he heard Anor’s words.

“Please eat your own.”

He gave up arguing. Crockta looked down at his plate. The flavor was delicious. Crockta dropped his head and put the meat in his mouth.

“Bul’tar...”

“It is nice here,” Anor suddenly said.

They were staying in the same room. After leaving Nuridot, Gushantimur’s castle was strange for them who had been camping outside. He had just finished bathing and changing clothes, so Anor felt like a beautiful elf again as he saw his shiny skin. Light shone on his face.

Tiyo had also washed and changed into pajamas given by the castle, causing him to look like the child of a noble family.

“Yes!”

Crockta showed his tough face.

“I wish I could stay here...” muttered Anor.

But he knew that he couldn’t.

“We don’t have a lot of time to waste dot,” replied Tiyo.

“I see...”

After stopping by the Temple of the Fallen God in Nameragon, they had to seek the cooperation of the dark elves to deal with the Great Clan. They were enjoying a little peace right now, but a horrible war in the north was waiting for them.

“Crockta, when will we leave this place?”

Crockta closed his eyes and thought about a reply to Tiyo’s question. Staying here and training would be a great help. However, they couldn’t stay forever. It was a reasonable time scale.

“In up to a week.”

“A week...”

“That is enough to achieve some progress.” Tiyo nodded.

“I will be sorry to leave.” Tiyo said. It seemed like he already had an attachment to the goblin archer, Kiao.

“We can come back again.”

“Again...?”

“That’s right.” Crockta smiled and said, “After defeating the Great Clan and bringing peace to the north, we can come back here

and spend a long break.”

“Hoh... good dot.”

“I’m really looking forward to it.” Anor laughed.

Tiyo declared, “At that time, I will become really strong and will break the nose of Kiao dot.”

“Kulkul, you can’t break it in a week?”

“I hate to admit it, but he is a great guy dot. Breaking his nose will be a hard feat to accomplish in just a week.”

Crockta agreed. Apart from Gushantimur, the other creatures were pursuing their own goals. There were countless hot-blooded people here in the Black Forest.

“It will be hard even if we are here for a month.”

He witnessed a new world, but he was still far from winning against Gushantimur. But one day, he would cross that insurmountable wall.

“Everybody, have strength.”

Anor got into bed in a calm manner. He seemed to have no

thoughts in his head. He stretched out on the soft quilt.

“Tomorrow we need to train properly.”

“Yes.”

“I’m going to turn off the lights.”

“Good night. Hihit.”

Thus, their first day in the Black Forest ended.

Time passed.

Crockta could now last much longer than before. Gushantimur stopped counting his deaths.

Crockta swung the greatsword and pressured Gushantimur.

Now he was able to switch the Pinnacle state on and off in an instant. However, Gushantimur was really tough. After truly knowing the Pinnacle state, Crockta realized what an exceptional swordsman he was.

But even Gushantimur hadn’t reached the true Hero state. How

much stronger was the power of the Hero state?

“Crockta, your goal is to kill the chieftain.”

“Yes.”

The more he knew, the more he became determined that the chieftain should be removed. He was a danger not just to the north, but the southern continent as well.

“It won’t be easy.”

“Would even you have a hard time?”

“Maybe.”

Crockta stopped his sword. He hadn’t expected the great chieftain to be so strong.

“He is stronger than Gushantimur?”

“That can’t be.” Gushantimur took a deep breath. “But there are various ways of becoming stronger. Your path isn’t the only way to increase in power.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You will soon find out.” Gushantimur wielded his blade. It hit the greatsword. There was a metallic echo. “Now focus on me.”

“Kulkul, understood.”

Crockta and Gushantimur competed. Crockta gradually started to seem like an opponent. There were parts where Gushantimur weakened, but it was true that Crockta had greatly developed.

It was the same for Tiyo.

“Ayaaat! General’s evolution!”

Tiyo closed his eyes and focused on General.

Clink, clink!

General’s appearance slowly changed. The muzzle opened and the barrel expanded. General’s new look was completed.

General Vulcan!

“I failed to make a cannon, but this is also cool.” Tiyo aimed Vulcan at Kiao who still looked displeased.

“Don’t think about such tricks kyak! You have to pursue the strongest heart kyak!”

“Noisy dot, if one doesn’t push you then I will use two. If two doesn’t work then I will use four then eight!”

“Stubborn gnome kyak!”

“Stiff goblin!”

The two glared at each other. Kiao shook his head and pulled out an arrow. A goblin who pursued becoming the strongest! A fearsome momentum came from him. It was like a dragon’s mouth appeared behind him. The force of a storm was condensed in Kiao’s arrow and aimed at Tiyo.

Tiyo didn’t stay still either. He aimed Vulcan at Kiao. Vulcan rotated and numerous magic bullets emerged.

The arrow left the bow.

“Kyu! Kya kekiyo kuweek!” shouted Kiao in the goblin language.

At the same time, a tremendous, fearsome storm appeared and descended that completely covered Tiyo. Facing this, Tiyo was just like a candle in front of the wind. The storm overcame him.

“.....!”

The practitioners watching the two couldn’t help gulping. The

gnome would be trampled under the goblin's arrow! However, flashes of light appeared inside the storm.

“.....!”

Dududududu!

A thunderous sound! Tiyo's Vulcan began its relentless assault against the storm. The two forces collided.

The power of the spatiotemporal storm! And the colorful magic bullets from Tiyo! The two forces swelled to their limit!

Kwaaaaaang————!

In the end, the arrow storm and General's destructive power collided with each other, causing a big explosion. Kiao and Tiyo flew through the air in the aftermath.

Flop!

Thud!

There was a huge mushroom cloud.

Hwiooooo!

Once the smoke disappeared, the sight of a goblin and gnome lying on the ground was revealed.

“Kuoh... truly strong...”

“You have grown, kyak...”

The two exchanged glances while collapsed on the ground. They raised their thumbs towards each other.

They had mocked each other in their first encounter in the Black Forest. Now they acknowledged each other.

Chapter 92 – Nameragon (1)

“Thanks again.”

Crockta extended a fist to Gushantimur and the other creatures. It was the first time the creatures experienced the orc’s greeting and they bumped fists with glee. In particular, the ogre looked at Crockta with passionate eyes as they said farewell.

The cyclops stared with his one eye and said slowly, “Next. You. I. Fight.”

“Kulkulkul. I’m looking forward to it.”

The cyclops had been watching Crockta since he first came. There was no opportunity to compete since he received guidance from Gushantimur all day. The cyclops was bigger than the ogre and was full of hulking muscles! It would be an exciting match.

Tiyo was chatting with the goblin archer as well as the kobold guerilla archer. “Next time we meet, I will turn you into a bee’s nest with Vulcan.”

“Kyak! I will drill a hole in your abdomen, a perfect hole kyak!”

“I will make you a tomb of arrows!”

It wasn’t a good conversation but he could feel their desire not to

say goodbye. Anor also exchanged farewells with the lich. The lich and its skeletons waved their handkerchiefs towards Anor.

Gushantimur was last. The mysterious hermit of the Black Forest. His true identity was a friendly black dragon who helped practitioners break through the walls they encountered.

“Listen to the very end.”

“That’s okay dot. I will hear it next time dot.”

Gushantimur spoke to Tiyo. Gushantimur knew right away that Tiyo was Hedor’s son. They had a similar appearance and General had been Hedor’s weapon. Gushantimur tried to tell him about Hedor but Tiyo refused.

Now he had the goal to get rid of the crazy chieftain with Crockta. If he found out about his father, his goal might become clouded. After killing the great chieftain, Tiyo would return to this place and listen to Gushantimur’s words about his father. It was also a pledge to come back here. Gushantimur respected his opinion.

“But I will ask one thing dot.” Tiyo’s face was determined. “Is my father alive?”

Gushantimur looked quietly at Tiyo and nodded. “He is.”

“That is enough. The rest will be told at the next opportunity.”

Tiyo turned away. Kiao clapped behind him.

Gushantimur's gaze focused on Crockta. "You are going to the Temple of the Fallen God."

"Yes."

"That's right. There..."

Gushantimur was still expressionless, but there was something in his eyes. He seemed to become lost in memories whenever he talked about the Temple of the Fallen God. However, Crockta didn't ask about it.

"When things are done, can we come back here?"

Gushantimur nodded. "Of course. You are my friends."

Crockta felt his chest become hot. Crockta extended his fist and touched it with Gushantimur's fist.. Gushantimur met that fist.

"Let's see each other again. Stay alive."

"You too."

It was a farewell. The moment he was going to turn around,

“.....”

Then someone spoke. Crockta looked towards the source of the sound. It was his waist.

The demon's skull with steel teeth at his waist, the Demon's Mouth. At the moment, it spoke.

“What did you say?”

He couldn't hear because it was a small sound. Crockta touched the belt. But it didn't say anything else. It looked like a normal steel belt like it had gone back to sleep.

“This guy's situation...”

It was the moment he turned to explain to Gushantimur,

“.....!” Gushantimur was watching Crockta with a surprised face.

And...

A flower bloomed. There was a faint smile on his face. The thin corners of his mouth covered in a bright smile for a short time. It was a beautiful expression on Gushantimur that Crockta had never seen before. His eyes were filled with laughter.

“It was like that.”

Gushantimur kept the bright smile as he said to Crockta, “I’ll be waiting for the day that we meet again.”

Crockta didn’t ask any more as he nodded with a smile.

They left the Black Forest and headed to Nameragon.

“Crockta, perhaps you’ve fallen dot.”

“What do you mean?”

“You looked stunned at Gushantimur’s smile dot.”

“Ah, no. I never...”

“Hihihit, I didn’t know that Crockta’s taste was like that.”

Crockta shook his head.

“What are you talking about? I am a heterosexual person who likes women.”

“Why does that matter dot?”

“.....?”

Anor started laughing. “Crockta doesn’t seem to know about dragons.”

“Too ignorant dot!”

Crockta frowned and said, “I don’t know what you are talking about.”

Tiyo climbed Crockta’s body and rode him like a horse. He stared at Nameragon in the distance and said, “Dragons have no gender dot. Wow, Nameragon is a big city.”

“What?”

Was there no gender, or were they a hermaphrodite?

“Nameragon is big. There are many people dot.”

“The thing before that...”

“Ah, a dragon can be a man or a woman whenever necessary. Didn’t you know? The next time you meet, Gushantimur might be a wonderful woman, hihihit.”

“What, is this a scandal? Love between a dragon and orc? Ahh, good. Hahahat!”

Tiyo and Anor laughed at him. Crockta shook his head. It was clear that Anor was taking after the wrong role model.

“We are almost there.”

Crockta ignored them and identified Nameragon in the distance. It was still far away so he couldn’t see it clearly. He used Heart and Soul Penetration. Not only did it have the ability to see through the enemy, but it also improved his eyesight.

Wait. That reminded him, he got a new skill.

[Status Window]

‘One who wants to become a hero’ Crockta, Orc Warrior.

Level: 65

Achievement Points: 545400

Assimilation: 86%

Abilities:

Peerless Mountain Seizing Strength (Pinnacle)

Regeneration Authority (Pinnacle)

Leyteno's Heart Swordsmanship (Pinnacle)

Extreme Fighting Spirit (Pinnacle)

Heart and Soul Penetration (Pinnacle)

Tattoos of War, Honour and Fighting Spirit (Pinnacle)

Army Crushing Roar of Madness (Pinnacle)

Creatures Butcher (Essence)

Unknown Mysterious Skill Before Use (???)

His new title 'One who wants to become a hero' was quite similar to the previous 'Person Pursuing the Pinnacle.' His skill experience would be accelerated until he reached the Hero rank. Since Pinnacle rank required more enlightenment than proficiency, it involved Crockta's proficiency and enlightenment.

His level and achievement points had risen significantly. His ranking would also rise.

Lastly, there was the mysterious skill that he wouldn't know what it was until he used it. It really was a mystery.

Crockta stopped trying to use it. If the skill caused an explosion, there was a chance that Tiyo and Anor might get hurt. Or maybe it was something like a huge blade storm that would sweep around him and create a huge crater. Maybe a meteor would fall from the sky and cause an area of death. Or like a cartoon, his hair would turn blonde and his whole body would power up.

“It is very difficult... Kulkulkul.”

That's right. Crockta was filled with great anticipation.

Big expectations might lead to greater disappointment, but Crockta's chest was burning at the thought of the skill. Moreover, it was a skill he got from a dragon. There was no doubt that the skill would match the fury of a dragon.

“Your expression is sneaky Crockta. What are you thinking... perhaps...”

“Nothing.” Crockta held out his hand.

“Hmm, it is suspicious.”

Tiyo got down from Crockta's neck.

“Anyway, Nameragon is right in front of us! I'm running dot! Let's go Anor!”

He started running towards Nameragon. Anor followed with the agile movements of a dark elf. Crockta was left alone. Crockta hesitated as he looked at the status window before using the skill.

“Unknown Mysterious Skill Before Use, activate!”

“Crockta, why are you so slow dot?”

“No reason.”

Crockta's face was strangely dark as he followed. Tiyo was confused.

“Do you not want to get further away from Gushantimur? Look...”

Crockta picked up a stone and threw it. Tiyo agilely avoided it.

“Hu, huhut! So sensitive dot!”

“Don’t push him too hard. Doesn’t Crockta need time to realize his feelings? Hahahahat.”

This guy Anor, he really knew how to trigger a person’s anger. After Tiyo, he threw a stone towards Anor. Anor screamed and ran away.

They arrived at the entrance of Nameragon. It was lacking compared to the continent, but the size was similar to Arnin that Crockta visited in the past. The moment they stood in front of the gate, dozens of bows aimed at them from the wall.

“.....!”

Crockta grabbed the handle of his greatsword. Tiyo raised General. Anor hid behind Crockta.

“Who are you?” A dark elf on top of the gate said. He was dressed similar to the other dark elves on the wall, but a red cloak was wrapped around him. “Orc, gnome. And a half breed with his ears cut. What a bizarre combination.”

Crockta’s eyes narrowed. Then he politely said.

“We have come to seek Nameragon’s cooperation. I was recognized by the leaders of Orcheim, Dejame, and Altanas in the Luklan Mountains, as well as Nadia of Nuridot. My name is Crockta.”

“Ahh. Those guys.” The dark elf placed a foot on the railing of the wall. “I heard that a trio was playing as a group of heroes in the north.”

It was an obvious taunt. Crockta realized that talking wouldn't change the outcome. He wasn't a person who would bow down in this type of situation.

“It will be difficult if you want to get our permission.”

“The conditions?”

“Hrmm... perhaps if you cut the necks of 50 of your kin? Or give me a box of gold. That much is needed for an orc to enter Nameragon.”

“It is too much.”

“It is reasonable, not too much...”

Crockta pulled out his greatsword before the elf finished speaking. “Don't misunderstand.”

“Pulling your sword in front of us, are you crazy?”

“Listen up.”

A huge momentum came from Crockta's body. The gate in front of him was big and thick. It was something that most people wouldn't even think about breaking through. But he was different.

The world slowed down. It was the world of the Pinnacle that he could freely enter after training with Gushantimur. In the world of the Pinnacle, the gate was just a piece of wood.

Crockta's vision was different now. "I might not be allowed in here, but I am being polite and understanding."

Crockta's greatsword crossed the space. A tremendous amount of power poured from Ogre Slayer. It crossed the space and slammed against the gate.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

A large crack was formed on the ground between Crockta and the gate.

"What?" The dark elf yelled with surprise.

The gate collapsed. Beyond the ruined gate, the landscape of Nameragon could be seen. It was moderately developed. The dark elves passing by stared at him in astonishment. Crockta told the dark elves above the gates.

“We can enter Nameragon whenever we want. Please know that.”

“.....!”

“I won’t enter out of consideration for you.”

The dark elves who witnessed Crockta’s action couldn’t say anything. Then the one in charge opened his mouth again.

“You, doing this, you’ve become our enemy...!”

But Crockta just turned around. “Let’s go.”

Crockta turned his back to Nameragon without any fear. Tiyo asked.

“It is okay dot? The Temple of the Fallen God is beyond there.”

“It’s okay.”

The dark elves were rushing around behind him, but Crockta didn’t care.

“They will need us in a few days.”

“What are you saying dot?”

Crockta recalled what he saw before.

Two days. Two days. Two days. Two days. Two days. Two days.
Two days. All of them, two days.

That was their remaining lifespan.

[The Gray God's Eyes (Outside the Ratings), it is a skill outside the ratings that has the power of a god. Once a day, you can temporarily see the remaining lifespan of those who have entered your field of view.]

Chapter 93 – Nameragon (2)

Crockta's party set up camp near Nameragon.

Tiyo was messing around with General and trying to imagine a new form for his weapon.

Along with the Vulcan form that could fire many bullets at once, Tiyo wanted to develop the same destructive power as the cannon showed by Gushantimur. But it didn't seem to be working out very well.

Tiyo examined General and exclaimed, "It is hard dot."

Then he looked at Anor who was playing with bones on the side. Anor had received a few bones from the lich and was advised to diligently handle them in order to use the power of a necromancer in a more sophisticated manner.

He didn't know what animal bones they were, but they came alive once Anor injected his strength. He wondered if they were dog bones as they ran around and rubbed themselves against Anor.

"Can we really go into Nameragon dot?"

According to Crockta, Nameragon would need them two days later. The exact meaning was unknown but Crockta didn't explain, so they just waited silently.

“Where is Crockta dot?”

“He is going to look around.”

Tiyo accidentally stepped on a bone.

“Ah, don’t step on my bones!”

“You dark elves are really stiff dot. I didn’t know Nameragon would react like this.”

“That’s right. They are very bad guys, which is why I cut my ears off.”

“.....”

Anor’s ears were healed but traces of the forceful cutting remained. It wasn’t a nice sight to see. He didn’t understand the impact it must’ve had on Anor.

“Which way did Crockta go dot?”

“That way. Ah, totally cool. Did you change it again?”

“Huhuhu, this is the sniper edition. Sniper.”

General had grown longer and Tiyo placed it on his shoulder.

They were currently on the plains and could see Nameragon. They had decided to stay under a large zelkova tree. There was a forest growing around Nameragon. It was a forest leading from the mountain side where the Black Forest was, but there were no threats like creatures present. Crockta was going to take a look at it.

Tiyo looked for Crockta. He felt Crockta's presence not long after he entered the forest. The orc's distinctive large body could easily be seen.

“Crockta! What do you find dot?”

“Tiyo.” Crockta was standing in the middle of the forest and looking somewhere.

“Did you find something dot?” Tiyo stood next to Crockta and looked in the direction of his gaze.

“They'll need us in two days so you must know something.”

“Um...”

Crockta frowned.

He was able to identity the lifespan of the elves on the walls of Nameragon using the Gray God's Eyes. All of them had two days remaining. This meant that most of the dark elf soldiers would die in two days.

The most likely thing was the orcs attacking, just like Nuridot. A skill was used to secretly infiltrate Nuridot, so it was possible to use the same method to attack Nameragon.

So he looked around to see if he could find enemy scouts near Nameragon. The best place to hide around Nameragon was the forest. It looked like it was flowing down from the mountain. After leaving the forest, it would only be a short walk to Nameragon. It was strange no matter how he thought about it.

Crockta told Tiyo honestly.

Tiyo touched his chin and fell into thought. “Hrmm... The ability to see the remaining lifespan... and furthermore, two days dot?”

“I was surprised as well.”

“If we wait we’ll know.” Tiyo nodded. “Can the lifespan change?”

“I don’t know yet.” Crockta checked the description of the skill but it didn’t reveal anything else. It wasn’t a common skill as it was outside the ratings. Maybe that was the only way to obtain the skill. “We will find out in a few days.”

Tiyo’s eyes looked through the scope of General in sniper form.

“But I don’t see anyone aiming for Nameragon...”

Two days passed. There weren’t any invaders like Crockta expected.

Crockta, Tiyo, and Anor sat around a campfire and eat a light stew while looking at Nameragon.

“Crockta, the day has come dot. Are you certain?”

“Um...”

If the system’s description was true, it was definitely happening today. At that moment,

Anor cried out as he looked at Nameragon’s walls, “Ehhh...?”

“What is it dot?”

“I feel something.”

“What do you feel dot?”

Anor rose from his spot with a hard expression. “Death.” He was a necromancer who dealt with death. His senses had developed

after training with the lich at Gushantimur's lair. "Something is happening within Nameragon."

Tiyo devoured his bowl of stew before rising. His hands naturally grabbed General.

"It is coming from inside."

Crockta also grabbed his greatsword.

"There."

He saw smoke rising from Nameragon.

"Something seems to be happening."

Crockta and Tiyo stepped forward first. They approached Nameragon's gate but didn't see the soldiers who greeted them before. It was the same when Crockta knocked on the gate. What was happening?

Crockta and Tiyo looked at each other.

"Enter."

"Good dot!"

Crockta pulled out his greatsword. The gate was hastily repaired so it wasn't as hard to destroy as before.

Crockta felt a little guilty as he swung Ogre Slayer again. His blade tapped the gate. Then the inside of Nameragon was revealed.

“.....!”

Fires were occurring all over the place. Arrows were flying in the distance. Crockta and Tiyo entered. They never imagined Nameragon looking so bleak. Battle noises were coming from everywhere.

The subjects of the fighting were all dark elves. The dark elves of Nameragon had split in two and were fighting each other.

Crockta gulped at the sight.

“An internal schism...”

Then all his questions were answered. Crockta's party were well-known in the north. They were good news for the dark elves who had to defend against the Great Clan's attacks after Nuridot. The Luklan Mountains and Nuridot would've sent messengers, but the reaction of the dark elves defending the walls was strangely hostile.

There was something wrong.

“There, someone is collapsed dot!”

Crockta and Tiyo discovered a dark elf. He was collapsed on the ground and bleeding.

“Hey, are you okay dot?”

“Uhh...” He stared at Tiyo with blurry eyes. “Dwarf... it is futile...”

“It isn’t futile and I’m not a dwarf dot!”

Tiyo slapped his head.

Then the dark elf’s face became more vivid as his spirit returned.

“You are...?”

“I am Tiyo and this is Crockta. What is happening in Nameragon?” Anor poured a potion on his wound. If the dark elf received treatment then he wouldn’t die.

“Travelers... right now, Nameragon is divided.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Those who want to keep the dark elf’s legacy. And...” The dark elf got up. “The reformists who joined hands with the Great Clan to move forward.”

“What about you?”

“I can’t trust the Great Clan. Holding hands with the crazy chieftain...”

He coughed. Blood flowed out. Anor stabilized him.

“The dark elves who didn’t trust the Great Clan were predominant, but at some point, a person named Aden appeared and started to recruit people. Their numbers grew until this bloodshed began in Nameragon...’

It was at that moment. An arrow flew towards the dark elf.

Crockta’s hand moved and caught it.

“.....!”

The dark elf gulped as he belatedly noticed that the attack. Crockta glanced in the direction of the attack. There was a group of dark elves holding arrows and knives.

“Who are you?”

Crockta got up. The dark elves became nervous at the sight of the orc's burly body. It was like a bunch of foxes greeting a tiger. Crockta stepped forward while they retreated.

“A-Are you from the Great Clan? Then we aren't enemies.”

A dark elf said. Crockta and Tiyo exchanged glances. At that moment, the enemy was identified.

“Not the Great Clan, but those who came to hunt the Great Clan dot!”

Tiyo fired General. The elves couldn't respond to the sudden burst of continuous fire and fell down. Crockta ran and subdued them.

“Maybe we should meet the leader of Nameragon dot.”

Crockta agreed. He didn't know who he should wield his sword against.

They brought the collapsed dark elf with them and walked through Nameragon. Arrows were flying here and there. Dead bodies were scattered all over the place.

“Where can I find the leader?”

The dark elf helped by Anor answered Crockta's question. “He

will be building a line of defense at City Hall...”

“City Hall?”

“If you go that way...”

They turned the corner and saw a group of dark elves. The dark elves discovered Crockta’s party and also raised their weapons.

Crockta also raised his greatsword.

“We have come to help Nameragon. Which side are you on?”

“I came to help Nameragon.”

A dark elf came forward. It was a dark elf with scars on his face. Everyone watched his movements like he was the leader.

“An orc with a red headband and a greatsword, yes, you are clearly Crockta.”

“.....!”

He knew Crockta.

“And the dwarf who is Crockta’s...”

“What dot?”

Tiyo raised General.

The dark elf continued. “Half breed trash with the ears cut off...”

“I wonder how your face will look once I smash it into the ground, you fucking bastard.

Anor used his unique cursing defense mechanism before the words were over. The dark elf looked stunned for a moment.

“Very vulgar...”

Crockta stepped forward with his greatsword.

“It is bullshit, especially after seeing how relaxed you are. Whatever the case, reveal yourselves first.”

“Huhu, excess self-confidence is like poison.”

He clapped his hands. Then a dark elf walked forward. The dark elf was holding a sword in both hands. His eyes stared blankly at Crockta. There were no emotions in them, like he was a doll.

“Kill the trash that disturbs the north.”

“Yes.”

The dark elf with the double swords came at them. Crockta felt an unknown momentum from him. His movements were light. This guy wasn't trash. He glanced at Tiyo and Anor and already plotted a battle strategy with them.

“I'll go first dot!”

Tiyo fired General. General's colorful magic bullets flew towards him.

At that moment, the dark elf with the double swords muttered.

“.....!”

A magic circle floated in the air and absorbed all of Tiyo's attacks. The magic circle shone as it received more energy and revolved around the dark elf. His expression was still calm.

“Magic swordsman?”

A dark elf with long grey hair, wielding double swords and magic. Crockta gulped. This didn't seem easy.

Crockta blinked. In the short moment that he closed his eyes and opened them again...

The dark elf's double swords were already before him.

Chapter 94 – Nameragon (3)

The pair of swords filled Crockta's vision as they flowed through the air like a meteor shower. As Crockta twisted his body to avoid the trajectory of one sword, the other aimed for his neck. The greatsword thwarted the attack. The dark elf's scimitars were blocked by Ogre Slayer. The sound of metal clashing rang out. It was an acrobatic type of defense.

The emotionless dark elf narrowed his eyes.

The world became increasingly slow. In it, Crockta and the dark elf attacked each other at their own pace. It was the world of the Pinnacle.

“Dammit.”

Crockta stepped back. It was too quick for the spectators to figure out what had happened. However, Tiyo realized the level of both of them and gripped General more tightly.

“Crockta. He is decent dot.”

“No.”

Crockta grinned as he said, “He is strong.”

Since his growth with Gushantimur, he was confident that no

one around him would be able to deal with his strength. At least, he believed that he wouldn't struggle until he met the great chieftain.

But he met such an opponent as soon as he reached Nameragon. What was happening?

“What is your name?” asked Crockta.

He greeted the dual wielding swordsman first. The dark elf with the double swords didn't answer. The two blades just moved closer to his tense body.

Instead, the dark elf standing behind him replied, “His name is Driden, a sword genius that won't be born again.” He laughed on his own. “Driden only listens to my commands. And as for my name, I am Aden, who will liberate Nameragon and open up a new north...”

Crockta no longer listened. He only cared about the name Driden.

Driden. He was a man worth remembering.

Driden's purple eyes seemed to shine gently. Crockta started laughing. The face was desolate but the eyes were shining like a child.

Crockta's skill had reached the Pinnacle level so Heart and Soul Penetration allowed him to clearly see the world. His vision was

clear. His own face could be seen in those purple eyes.

Yes.

Crockta raised his greatsword. In Driden's eyes, Crockta was smiling happily with the same eyes as Driden.

Crockta spoke, "Driden. My name is Crockta."

"....."

"I would love to fight you properly, but it seems like this isn't the right time."

Crockta swung his greatsword as he finished speaking. A black wave emerged along Ogre Slayer's trajectory. It headed towards the dark elves who were blocking this place.

".....!"

Driden quickly muttered under his breath and a magic circle reappeared in the air. A magic shield unfolded around Driden, but the ones outside it couldn't block Crockta's attack. The ferocious energy slashed at the bodies of the dark elves and a fountain of blood appeared on the outskirts of Aden's group.

"What?"

Aden freaked out.

“Run!” Crockta carried the injured dark elf and immediately fled. Tiyo and Anor swiftly followed. The opponents didn’t chase them.

They ran through Nameragon. They turned the corner several times. He didn’t see a single person in the square where people originally gathered.

Sometimes dark elves would look at them through cracks in the window.

Crockta asked the injured dark elf, “What is your position?”

Right now, all of the civilians were hiding like mice. The fact that he was caught in this fight meant he was a soldier mobilized for the city’s defense, or he had some type of relationship with Nameragon’s leader.

“I...”

The dark elf gazed at Crockta. He looked at Tiyo and Anor in turn before opening his mouth.

“I am Adinio, the brother of Radet, who is the leader of Nameragon. I work as an administrator of Nameragon.”

Crockta nodded. “So they were looking for you?”

“They wanted to use me as a hostage to intimidate my brother. Aden is hurrying to catch my brother. Before ‘he’ comes back.”

“He?”

“No matter how much Nameragon is lacking in battle resources, it was easy for Aden to strike because ‘he’ was away.” Adinio’s eyes shone. “The great magician, Jamero.”

“Jamero?”

“He departed for Spinoa for a while. He is the one who has the most power in Nameragon. If he were here, then Aden would’ve never done this.”

Matters in Nameragon seemed complex.

Crock realized it once again. Ever since he started Elder Lord, he learned that there were no simple incidents. Desire and greed were entangled together, eventually leading to tragedy. This truly resembled reality.

In the first place, was a skill to read someone’s lifespan even possible? The skill that the system presented him with, Gray God’s Eyes.

Crockta remembered the face of someone who spoke to him with sad eyes. It was Gordon who wielded tremendous power with his sword. He spoke about the Temple of the Fallen God. Everything was clearly connected.

He had to go there to find the answers. In order to do that, he needed to save this place.

“What are you going to do?” asked Crockta.

At present, Crockta didn't know about the internal circumstances of Nameragon. Adinio would be able to think of a better plan as the administrator. Crockta, Tiyo, and Anor watched him.

Adinio pondered for awhile before opening his mouth, “Right now, they are trying to seize the City Hall. In particular, the skills of that person called Driden is too great...”

“I agree.”

Crockta nodded.

The dual wielding swordsman, Driden's abilities alone were enough to overwhelm the battlefield. The pair of swords battered the target like a storm while attacks could be blocked with magic. Common soldiers would fall down like autumn leaves.

“Let’s go to City Hall and join my brother.”

“How?”

“There is a secret passage.”

“A secret passage? Then, what if your brother escaped through the passage?”

“No. Brother would never leave.” Adinio spoke firmly. “City Hall can’t be passed over to Aden.”

All the information was contained in City Hall. There was top secret information about Nameragon that Aden couldn’t be allowed to obtain. It could endanger the entire dark elf alliance, including Nameragon and Spinoa.

“He is such a person.”

“Um.”

Crockta nodded. It would be better to meet up with the person called Radet. Adinio took the lead. They turned back to the outskirts of the city. They occasionally met dark elves who sympathized with Aden but Tiyo and Crockta easily subdued them.

The group’s weapons were taken away and they were tied up before heading out towards the secret passage again. Adinio

stopped when he reached an inn. There was an inn in Nameragon that didn't exist in Nuridot. The size of the city was large so there was an inn.

Adinio checked that there was no one around and quietly opened the door. The interior was quiet. The pub on the first floor that wouldn't normally be noisy was completely empty. Crockta, Tiyo, and Anor followed Adinio inside. Anor carefully closed the entrance. The door was blocked and the sunlight entering cut off. Darkness filled the interior of the inn.

Adinio whispered, "Reina."

No one answered.

"Reina?"

His voice rang through the inn.

Step. Step.

There was the sound of footsteps on the stairs connected to the above floor. They were light and nimble footsteps.

"Adinio?"

A female dark elf appeared with a bow on her back and a sword in her hand. She seemed to be checking the internal boundaries and

lowered her sword once she saw Adinio.

“What is happening? Looking like that... and those people.”

“Thank god you’re safe.”

Adinio drew her into a hug. She relaxed and they exchanged greetings. Adinio introduced Crockta’s group.

“They are the ones who helped me.”

“Perhaps, Crockta?”

“How did you know?”

“I heard the rumors. I’ve heard about you a few times from Radet. Are you really Crockta?”

Crockta nodded. She sighed with relief.

“How fortunate. It is nice to meet you. I’ve heard rumors that you are incredibly strong. Come in.”

Tiyo coughed to announce his presence. His eyes expected a saga about him. But she broke Tiyo’s expectations.

“The followers are here as well.”

“.....!”

‘F-Follower...!’ Tiyo muttered with a devastated face. Crockta tapped on Tiyo’s shoulder with an expression of victory.

“Did anyone come from the passage?”

“No, not yet.”

They headed to the basement of the inn. It was an old warehouse. There was a small door covered in a cloth behind a pile of junk. Reina shook off the dust.

“Radet is safe, right?”

“I’m sure he is safe.”

“Yes... Please, Adinio.”

“Of course.” Adinio turned and looked at Crockta, Tiyo, and Anor. “This is a late thank you. Thank you for helping Nameragon despite having no relation to us.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Will you come help us once again?”

“Of course.”

“Thank you. I will surely repay you.” Adinio bowed his head. Then he exchanged glances with Reina.

“Be careful.”

“You too.”

The door to the secret passage was opened. A large tunnel appeared. Adinio took a light and entered the tunnel first. Crockta, Tiyo, and Anor followed. Adinio’s light lit up the tunnel. The opening was narrow but it soon became a wide passage. It was so well made that it wouldn’t collapse easily.

Sometimes when they walked, they could hear footsteps and vibrations above their heads. Perhaps a battle was occurring on top. Adinio’s pace increased. The light cast shadows at his gestures.

“Go quickly.”

Crockta also started running. They ran around a few turns. Then at the end, a narrow space like the beginning appeared. An iron door was beyond it. Adinio crawled through the narrow tunnel and grabbed the iron door. It was old so it wouldn’t open. Rust fell from it.

“I’ll try it.”

Crockta went forward. The two of them exchanged positions. Adinio was barely able to retreat behind Crockta.

Crockta grabbed the doorknob. His muscles swelled as he pulled open the door.

Kiiiiik!

The iron door started to slowly open. Crockta fell back as the door suddenly opened.

“Ouch...”

Adinio trembled after being hit by Crockta. Crockta apologized.

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay. Once inside...”

The iron door revealed another warehouse inside City Hall. There were many dusty tools piled up. Crockta, Adinio, Tiyo, and Anor exited the tunnel. The inside of City Hall was quiet. Adinio led the way. They climbed the stairs of the warehouse, revealing a clean internal structure. City Hall was located in the north part of the city.

“Brother would’ve blocked the entrance to City Hall. I’ll go up first.”

“I understand.”

Adinio climbed the stairs. Loud noises started to gradually be heard. They were able to meet a dark elf inside City Hall.

“Who?”

As Adinio and Crockta reached the final steps, arrows and knives were aimed at them.

“.....!”

It was a familiar face.

“You...”

“I ended up seeing you again.” Crockta grinned. The ‘2 days’ was still floating above his head. “I told you. We can come in at any time. “

It was Nameragon’s defense captain who stopped Crockta from entering the gate. His face distorted before turning towards Adinio and saying, “Adinio! You led them here?”

“Yes.”

“What are you...?”

“They came to help us. What are you talking about?” Adinio frowned. He was in a bad mood. “If you are still willing to emphasize the dark elves’ pure blood in this situation, then shut up. Ironically, it is the pure blood dark elves attacking us now.”

“.....!”

The captain’s face flushed.

Adinio sighed and said, “Now isn’t the time to fight. Where is my brother?”

“He is in the office.”

As they were talking, the dark elf soldiers were firing arrows through the windows. It was to contain Aden’s group who were looking for a way to enter the blocked City Hall.

“They will soon enter. In particular, the dark elf using double swords is strong. Crockta is required.”

Adinio said soothingly. The guard’s face calmed and he nodded.

“I know.”

“I will go to see my brother. Crockta. Let’s go together.”

He followed Adinio and they arrived at the office of Radet, leader of Nameragon.

The door opened. The sight inside the office was completely different from what Crockta expected.

Chapter 95 – Nameragon (4)

In the office, a dark elf was huddled on the floor and shivering. It was a miserable appearance.

“Brother...” Adinio muttered.

The leader of Nameragon, Adinio’s brother, discovered them. “Oh, you came, Little Brother,” said Radet in a lively voice before kicking the shivering dark elf.

“Cough...!”

The huddled up dark elf rolled around on the floor. Radet, a dark elf with a sturdy body, was beating a dark elf in his office. Radet looked around for something before wrapping a leather belt around his hand. Then he hit the dark elf. The dark elf begged for mercy.

However, Radet was decisive. “Now tell me. Why did Aden become like this?”

“Nothing... don’t know...”

“Not yet.” Radet placed his foot on the head and spat. The saliva mixed in with the tears flowing down the dark elf’s cheek.

“Little Brother, this guy is a traitor.”

“Brother.”

“That bastard has been provoked by the fact that Jamero isn’t here. Hahahat. Bastard.” Radet swung the belt fiercely. Blood splattered. The dark elf’s scream rang through the office. “This guy, he gave them most of the information about the garrison!”

Radet trampled on the dark elf before tilting his head.

“By the way, who is your friend over there?”

“Crockta came to help us.”

“Ohh, Crockta!” He dropped the belt and opened his arms. “Crockta, the orc who repelled the Great Clan in the Luklan Mountains and Nuridot! Really! It is a pleasure!”

“I am alive.”

Radet approached Crockta and hugged him. He laughed and hit Crockta’s back.

“I heard the rumors, but now you are in my office!”

Crockta wondered if this man was an orc inside a dark elf’s skin. His body and actions made him seem like a soldier of Orcrox.

“I am ashamed to meet you in a situation like this.”

Radet beckoned for them to sit. He grabbed the dark elf lying on the floor and threw him into a corner. The dark elf groaned against the wall.

“Leave him alone.”

“He will die.”

“Numerous garrison soldiers and civilians have died because of him. It is cheaper for him to die.”

Radet was decisive. Crockta’s group sat down on chairs in the office.

“How is it outside?”

“Aden has already taken control of the crowd.”

“Shit. If only Jamero was here.”

“When will he come back?”

“It will be 10 more days. If I contact him then he might come sooner.” Radet bowed his head and touched his chin. “This isn’t

good. Especially that Driden guy...”

He glanced at the sword on his desk. It was larger than the rapiers normally used by the dark elves and smaller than Crockta’s greatsword. It was a bastard sword. He shook his head.

“No. It is hard for me.” He judged the situation calmly, unlike his urgent personality.

“Brother, it might be possible if it is Crockta,” said Adinio.

He had already seen Driden and Crockta face each other. It was only a moment, but Crockta wasn’t pushed by him. Rather, he dealt a blow to Aden’s group and escaped. Given the right circumstances, he believed that Crockta would win.

“I see.”

Radet had an uneasy but positive expression on his face.

“However, it isn’t just a simple matter of winning the battle.”

“What do you mean?”

“Aden suddenly gained influence. Citizens started agreeing with him. They believe in the absurd bullshit of cooperating with the Great Clan! They also grabbed their weapons.”

Radet looked at the dark elf in the corner. The dark elf was sitting down and avoided his gaze.

“It is the same for this guy as well. He isn’t stupid, so it is strange that he joined Aden.”

“Then there is something behind it.”

“Yes. In fact, even Aden seems affected. He is hot-tempered but he doesn’t have the guts to act crazy like this.”

Radet was silence for a moment before speaking like it was a secret. “The Great Clan.”

“What about the Great Clan?”

“The great chieftain has a mysterious shaman beside him.” His gaze was calm. Radet was a man who could be as cold as ice when necessary. “The shaman has an unknown power. In particular, people are acting strangely according to his will. There is a rumor that the great chieftain suddenly went crazy because of him.”

“Then...”

“It is just my opinion.” Radet turned his eyes to Adinio, Crockta, Tiyo and Anor. “The war with the Great Clan wouldn’t be a simple story where victory is achieved if you beat them. There are clearly strange things.”

Crockta's eyes sank at the words. He had a point.

The gnomes were longtime neighbors in the Luklan Mountains yet they suddenly attacked. In Nuridot, orcs had infiltrated to obtain hostages. Now an agitator called Aden appeared and divided Nameragon from the inside.

It was different from the usual way that orcs fought. It was possible if there was the power of an evil shaman.

“I can't let it go according to his will.”

Radet got up from his seat.

“Check the defenses again. City Hall has a magic circle installed for emergencies. We will be able to hold on until Jamero comes.”

He tied up the beaten dark elf and walked out of the office.

The garrison soldiers, including the captain, were firing arrows out the window. Aden's group continued to hover around City Hall.

“They won't come in easily. If they become more violent, the citizens won't tolerate it anymore. It is advantageous for us who

are trying to buy time.”

Radet murmured as he looked outside. Crockta extended his head. He saw Aden and Driden. Suddenly, Driden raised his head.

He looked at Radet’s window then glanced over the garrison members firing the arrows. Crockta stepped back to avoid revealing the existence of the secret passage.

Driden started walking forward. The dark elves were nervous. It wasn’t anyone else, but the demonic swordsman Driden. It was a slow pace, like he was just walking. A few arrows flashed towards him but they were all deflected by Driden’s scimitars. It was an amazing sight.

“What should we do?”

The guards shouted. Radet maintained his composure.

“It’s okay. This place is guarded by magic.

Even if he approached the first floor, he wouldn’t be able to enter and would be thrown back by the magic. Radet believed that. It was a magic circle carefully made by Jamero. Enemies could never destroy it unless they were strong magicians.

Indeed, Driden trembled for a moment and stepped back. Every time he tried to enter City Hall, electricity would shoot out and block outsiders.

“He can never come in...”

The moment that Radet was speaking. A shaking was felt inside City Hall.

“.....!”

Driden wielded his sword.

At the same time, his scimitars shone purple. Then a magic circle that was the same color revolved around him. It was the same as the magic to block attacks. The two magic powers collided with each other and caused a shock wave. It was this unseen force that shook City Hall.

“That isn’t a magic swordsman,” Tiyo said. “That magic sword dot... it is very powerful.”

There was a strange twist of magic power every time Driden hit the barrier. That feeling was never calm. The magic circle around City Hall was gradually getting cracked.

“Radet!” A garrison member ran up the stairs. “The crystal core... it is cracked.”

“.....!”

The magic circle couldn't be operated alone. If a magician wasn't present, they needed something that contained the corresponding magic power. Whenever Jamero wasn't present, the source was a crystal that contained his magic power.

“Dammit.” Radet swallowed down his nausea and laughed. “What to do? I guess we have to fight.”

The garrison members continued to fire arrows but the situation didn't look good.

Radet brought the bastard sword from his office. Crockta had never seen a dark elf hold a heavy weapon but Radet's muscles were good.

“Crockta, are you going to fight?”

“Of course.”

“Thank you. I will never forget your help.” Radet said, “I know that our dark elves are sometimes hostile to other species. If you catch that Aden, at least Nameragon won't stop you from your goal.

Crockta grinned. “Don't worry. Not long after Nameragon, the whole north will fear me.”

Crockta held Ogre Slayer. “I won't catch just Aden, but the great chieftain as well.”

“Indeed!” Radet burst out laughing. “I was thinking too small. Hahat! Let’s go, guys!”

Radet had the power to encourage people. His cavalier attitude gave them the belief that they could survive the life-threatening situation with him. The garrison equipped themselves. Some archers remained at the windows on the upper floor, while the rest went down the stairs to meet Driden.

“Tiyo. What is that magic sword?”

Crockta had never met a warrior who used a magic sword.

“Think of it like my General dot. He uses magic while wielding the sword. It is dangerous since you don’t know what is going to happen. That sword is probably focused more on defense magic.”

“Defense magic.”

Speaking of which, Crockta was vulnerable to non-physical attacks like magic from magicians and shamans. He could avoid it after reaching Pinnacle, but he would struggle if he met a senior mage of the same level. If he had a magic artifact like Driden, he would be able to defend against magic.

‘It doesn’t suit me.’

Crockta imagined himself wielding the slender scimitars.

“Um...”

The appearance really wasn't good.

The party arrived on the first floor while Crockta was thinking about this. Driden was breaking the defense magic at the entrance of City Hall. The drops of sweat on Driden's forehead showed that it wasn't easy. Every time he wielded the sword, he had to use the magic circle so his body was weary.

“What are you doing? Go quickly! Stupid guy!” Aden's voice was heard, “Do it faster, you idiot!”

Crockta's eyes narrowed. It wasn't a respectful attitude. The face of Aden, saying that Driden only listened to his commands, vividly appeared in his head. He didn't like it.

Crockta stepped forward. Radet and the garrison members turned towards him. Tiyo and Anor were familiar with Crockta so they already knew what he was going to do. Tiyo grabbed General while Anor held a small wand gifted to him by the lich in the Black Forest.

Crockta stood at the entrance. He met Driden's eyes. Crockta opened the door.

“.....!”

The door was opened from inside so the magic circle faded. Crockta spoke, “We meet again, Driden.”

“.....”

He still didn't say anything. However, his eyes were shining like he was glad. It looked like he still wanted to swing his swords, as he alternated between Crockta's face and the greatsword.

“Wait a minute. There is no urgency.”

“.....”

His double swords twitched in the air. He looked like he wanted to stab Crockta right now.

Aden approached behind Driden. There were a lot of people. It was more than double Radet and the garrison members. Besides, they were holding garrison members already captured as hostages.

They had been able to identify the garrison members thanks to the whistleblower and struck before the soldiers arrived for their shift. The guards on duty were also attached on the way to City Hall.

Aden laughed and said, “Remember, Radet. The foolish days when you wandered as an elf on the battlefields.”

“I remember. Now I am the mayor of Nameragon while you are still wandering about.”

“Shut up.”

Aden’s face was flushed. However, his face returned to normal in a few minutes. Then he spoke like he was acting in a play, “Oh, God help me. The old grudge is returning and grabbing at my neck. The cold fire that hasn’t changed as years passed, just accumulated like dry and unbearable soot!”

“Are you still writing drama pieces?”

“You will know what’s coming. It is time that you are removed as mayor of Nameragon.”

Aden pushed Driden’s back. He took a step forward. Radet looked at Driden. He examined the face closely and an old memory popped up.

“You, perhaps...”

“Yes.” Aden said, “This is Driden, the son of Hurio, whom you killed.”

Driden raised the pair of swords. Aden pointed to Radet and said, “Now, Driden. Kill your father’s enemy. My soldier, my sword,

wipe out the tumor of Nameragon...!”

The moment that Aden shouted,

Chaeng!

Something flew.

Rattle!

“Ack...”

Blood was scattered.

A small dagger had flown towards Aden and Driden struck at it. However, the power was so enormous that Driden couldn't reflect it completely. Instead, it was pushed into the shoulder of the elf standing next to Aden.

They looked at the epicenter of the dagger.

“You are too talkative.” It was Crockta. “Listen.”

Crockta raised his greatsword. A fearsome momentum gushed from him, causing all the dark elves except for Driden to step back. Driden just smiled happily and prepared his double swords.

Everyone sensed it. They didn't need to say anything.

At this moment. The fight between monsters that they couldn't interfere in began.

Chapter 96 – Monsters (1)

‘Keep this in mind, Driden.’

‘Orcs are strong and persistently struggle if the attack doesn’t kill them. Make sure you cut their heads off.’

He recalled that voice. He was led by two things: the voice and his instincts. As long as he followed those two things, the enemies would eventually beg him for mercy.

Sometimes he killed his enemies and other times he kept them alive. Then he looked for the next opponent. It was his routine. So why?

“.....!”

Kakakaang!

The double swords were thrown back at the same time.

It was a crazy power.

Driden pulled up his double swords again and started moving. All of his strikes were on the offensive, his double swords looking like they were dancing. He followed the rhythm and moved between the enemy’s gaps in their defense. The core of the enemy was revealed.

Then...

Kakakaang!

They bounced off again.

This orc was different. His tempo was constantly shifting.

Driden's face stiffened. The orc facing him was holding a massive greatsword.

“Kuk!”

Nevertheless, he was incredibly fast. The gigantic greatsword moved from east to west, west to east. Its trajectory was unpredictable. He had barely broken through City Hall's magic, but now he was being pushed out of City Hall by the orc.

“I can't smash the building.” The orc grinned.

Driden also forced a laugh. He pretended to smile, but his insides were boiling.

No fun. Fighting was dull.

He squeezed the double swords in his hands. The greatsword was

big and heavy. Therefore, Driden dug inwards.

“Hat!”

His double swords shook like flowers. Driden expected the attack to tear the enemy's body apart; however, the greatsword was right in front of his nose instead. The tremendous pressure pushed his body down towards the ground. He stopped all attacks and rolled across the ground. He was barely able to avoid the enemy's blade.

He rose from his spot, breathing hard.

“.....”

The surroundings were still. Indeed, it wasn't fun. Fighting was a two-way street. Each attack must stir the other person. However, his attack had no effect on the orc. Rather, he was constantly defending against the orc's strikes.

He clenched his double swords again.

“Crazy bastards...”

Someone's voice broke the silence. The people around them couldn't figure out what was happening right now.

Driden shook his head and got back into position. The orc could also enter the 'zone' like him. No, he accelerated the construction

of it more freely than Driden.

Not fun, just another unlucky bastard.

“What is it?” asked the orc.

Driden stared at the heinous face before him. The orc’s eyes shone even more fiercely.

“Smile.”

Then the orc’s figure disappeared.

“.....!”

He lost the enemy. Then the greatsword appeared in front of his nose. It was an explosive acceleration that seemed to leap across space. This couldn’t be avoided. Alarms rang through his whole body.

He instinctively activated the magic of his scimitars. The defense was unfolded.

Kaaaang!

A magic circle appeared between him and the greatsword.

“Hoh.” The orc’s eyes widened. However, cracks started forming and the magic circle shattered in a few moments. The orc got rid of the remnants of magic power.

“How many times can you use this?”

Driden stepped back and took deep breaths. His double swords shook. He needed to find his own rhythm. He had to maintain his flow and shake the enemy’s flow. It was the only way to win the fight.

‘Orcs are simple.’

‘They are all about pushing with force.’

‘Trust your techniques.’

Once again, he heard the voice of his father.

He had all types of tricks to use with the double swords. He kept his left shoulder down and struck with the right. One trick would lead to being able to hit the enemy two then three or four times. He confused the enemy and then used attacks that couldn’t be disrupted.

He could do it. He was a genius. When he fought seriously, no one could catch up with him. He believed it. However, the orc wasn’t fooled by his tricks. It felt like all his thoughts were being read.

A blade split the air and hit his shoulder.

“Kuk!”

The scimitars cried out and the magic was triggered. If it wasn't for the magic swords, he would've died once again. It was two times. He borrowed the power of the magic swords to save his life twice.

“What are you doing, you idiot! Fight properly! Just chop apart that slow orc!”

Aden's voice was heard. Driden was annoyed. Aden couldn't follow the movements with his eyes yet he called the orc slow. But it was true that he needed to fight properly.

Driden grit his teeth and tightened his grip on his scimitars.

He moved forward again.

The greatsword's huge size was an annoying obstacle. The orc used the greatsword with bizarre reflexes. If he tried to stab through the gaps, the attack would be blocked by the blade, the handle and sometimes the steel belt at the orc's waist.

Therefore, he needed to speed up. Driden focused his mind.

He stomped his feet. One time, two times, three times faster. Gradually, his body accelerated beyond realistic limits.

He was a bird gliding over the orc with wings spread. The bird's speed gradually slowed.

Cut in half. He was cut in half. Cut in half again.

The flight in the sky faltered. The speed converged infinitely with his spirit.

Stop. It was a world that never stopped moving.

In it, Driden moved alone. The enemies observing the fight, including Radet, were gone.

Unmatched step. His identity was someone who would cut the neck of the enemy before they even knew they died. That was assassination. The pair of swords flashed towards Crockta's neck.

He saw Crockta's eyes staring into the distance. At that moment,

Suruk.

Crockta's eyes moved. He laughed at Driden. Driden got goosebumps.

At the same time, something unknown happened. In the still world, Crockta's greatsword started to move. It met the double swords. The two exchanged blows again. Both of them sped up in the world of acceleration. Driden breathed roughly and blocked it.

There was a slight smile on Driden's hardened face. He would die if he made the slightest mistake. The greatsword hacked at his clothing several times and he repeatedly came close to death.

There was a sense of uplifting. Adrenaline filled his body like a drug.

"Yes, yes."

The orc came one step closer to him. Driden stepped forward. Like a giant, he poured out his courage towards the orc who had a terrifying presence. Courage was never his thing, but it seemed like he would need it today.

The orc smiled. Driden also grinned. Their weapons moved slowly.

The two of them collided once again.

Radet was able to witness their fight. It was an honor.

“What is going on right now?” asked the garrison leader.

However, Radet couldn't properly explain it.

“Crockta seemed a little superior at first, but they have become similar again.” That was all he could say.

He couldn't add any commentary. A fight between heaven and earth! The surrounding buildings were broken in the aftermath. They cut and chopped at each other in the streets. That was all.

However, their movements were so fast and elaborate that it was hard to follow with the eyes. They were acrobatics that expressed the world of the Pinnacle. It was a close battle where one mistake would lead to their lives being lost.

They were dancing at the boundary of life and death.

“Monsters.”

He could only say that.

Crockta used the greatsword like it was another limb and Driden who showed extreme dual swordsmanship, they were both monsters that transcended the Pinnacle. It was a fight of monsters that could destroy armies alone.

Even the dark elves not versed in fighting could feel it. Thus,

nobody opened their mouths and just watched the two fight blankly. It even managed to keep Aden silent.

The fight between the two continued. Radet inwardly hoped that it would last forever. Then he realized something after having that thought.

He smiled. He was once a warrior who swept the battlefield with his bastard sword. Therefore, he could see even more how fascinating their fight was.

Some time passed. Their fighting made even the sense of time dull.

Radet spoke first, “Aden.”

Aden raised his head and responded, “What?”

“Did you have to do this?”

“Shut up. Borrowing the strength of a wandering orc, how far has Radet fallen?”

“You are the crazy one who is using Hurio’s son.”

As Crockta and Driden exchanged blows, Radet and Aden continued their conversation.

“The son of the one you killed returned for revenge! It is a sharp grudge that can only be cut off with the sword.”

“You must remember what type of person Hurio was.”

“That doesn’t matter.”

Aden raised his hands. He pointed at the dark elves holding rapiers and bows behind him.

“The general trend doesn’t change. I will obtain Nameragon, join forces with the Great Clan to unify the north and make the continent the land of the dark elves.”

Aden’s eyes were blazing as he spoke. It was the expression of a spellbound fanatic. Radet was unable to convince him with words.

He looked at the bastard sword. At one time, he was also a warrior. The warrior who killed Hurio. But he couldn’t overcome these numbers.

“You seem to have forgotten about us dot.”

At that moment. A noise was heard from behind him. It was Tiyo. He aimed General at Aden’s group. At the same time, the silent Anor opened his power. Dark energy started to spread along the ground.

“.....!”

Radet grinned and Aden's face distorted. Aden lowered his hands.

“Attack!”

From that point on, the dark elves started their protest.

Arrows flew in a straight line. They fired indiscriminately without worrying about Crockta and Driden. Arrows flew towards Crockta and Driden, with the rest flooding towards Radet and the garrison soldiers.

The first one affected was Driden as an arrow aimed at him from behind. He turned his body like a spin-top and struck the arrow with his double swords. Crockta didn't miss the gap that was revealed. As Driden was defending, Crockta's greatsword descended towards Driden.

Driden crossed his double swords and blocked the strike. But his posture was unstable and he staggered. The greatsword neared him again. Driden gritted his teeth. He sloppily moved to the side and evaded the greatsword. Crockta pursued him. Crockta was on the offensive while Driden was on the defensive. The tide was gradually shifting towards Crockta.

Aden saw this and ordered his men to fire again. The dark elves started to prepare their arrows. At that moment,

Clink.

Crunch. Clink.

Aden lifted his head at the sound. It was the strange gnome standing with Radet. The artifact in his hand was curiously changing. The muzzle multiplied by two and then four, and the barrel expanded. It slowly started to spin.

“.....?”

Aden started blankly at the muzzles. Tiyo cried out as Vulcan rotated in earnest, “Kiyoooooh!”

After lowering his body towards the ground, Tiyo fired Vulcan. He withstood the recoil and sprayed his magic bullets to the left and right.

“Crockta! Take care of yourself dot!”

“No problem!”

Crockta jumped from the ground. Tiyo’s bullets hit the ground where Crockta had jumped up. Driden had no information about Tiyo’s magic bullets so he tried to stop them with his sword, only to become embroiled in the aftermath. General damaged Driden’s body with magic power.

A few seconds of indiscriminate shooting! The short attack led to the enemies being incapacitated for a moment. Tiyo gasped from the energy consumption and stepped back.

Then Radet and the garrison moved forward. It was a melee but Radet and his garrison were already in control. Aden, who was holding a weapon for the first time in his life, surrendered the moment the weapon's shadow fell on his head.

Once Crockta overtook Driden, Aden gave up and surrendered to Radet. It was a splendid ending.

Tiyo puffed out his chest and proudly exclaimed, "Huhuhu, Crockta did you see dot?"

"You have a strange expression."

"Are you jealous dot? You fought hard but I was the one who decided our victory!"

Tiyo started running. "Me!"

He jumped back and forth with his hands above his head. Tiyo struck a pose filled with 100% testosterone and self-pride!

"Tiyo!"

Chapter 97 – Monsters (2)

Aden's conspiracy was stopped by Tiyo's actions.

The garrison leader announced that the situation was over. Vigor started to return to Nameragon and citizens reappeared on the deserted streets and in the plaza. Their response was surprisingly lackadaisical.

“What? I told you that Radet was going to fix it.”

“Radet is mayor, so how could Aden overthrow him?”

“The garrison suffered, truly suffered.”

Nameragon started to return to its ordinary routine.

It would've been a dangerous situation without Crockta's group, but the citizens firmly believed in Radet. It was clear how much faith he normally gave. Radet went around Nameragon to thank the citizens and stabilize the public.

“Citizens! Thank you! Thanks to your calm actions, we were able to finish the situation quickly. Hahahat!”

“Hey, thank you, Mayor.”

“No. No. This isn't my work. Hahat! Aden was a little bit hard!”

Occasionally, there were people who became nervous about Crockta's group. "Mayor. Who is that orc and that gnome? The situation is chaotic and..."

"Ahh, they are my friends. They helped a lot."

"If you say so, Mayor."

Radet toured the city once before returning to City Hall. He had yet to decide what to do with Driden and Aden, who were tied up.

Radet sighed, "Let's hold off until Jamero returns."

He ignored Aden's poisonous glance and struck his back. "If you were caught in some magic, I have to consider that."

He believed that there was a shaman who was assisting the great chieftain. Aden didn't deny it. He didn't think he would fall for such a trick, but he wasn't going to throw away the chance of cutting down his punishment after being defeated. He certainly was an opportunist.

Radet's gaze turned towards Driden.

"Driden."

Radet called his name. Driden shook his head no emotion on his

face. However a raging fire could be seen within his eyes.

“The son of Hurio.” Driden nodded in response.

Radet recalled the past.

Hurio used a pair of swords, just like Driden. His nickname was sword demon. He swung his swords like two demons were attached to his arms. And Radet killed him.

“I definitely killed him.”

Driden’s hands twitched. He was instinctively looking for his swords. However, there was nothing he could wield.

“But I don’t regret it. Do you know what your father was like?”

“.....”

“He was a madman who killed everyone around him.”

That’s right. Hurio wasn’t in a normal state. He was a swordsman who traveled around the north on an adventure, but suffered critical injuries in a fight one day. The wounds could be treated, but the pain and fallout from it caused him to become paranoid, eventually turning him into a madman.

“Do you know?”

Driden dropped his head. He spat on the ground and looked back up, this time with no emotion in his eyes. “So?”

“I did what I had to do.”

“It doesn’t matter.” Driden looked at Radet’s neck. If he managed to get his hands on anything around him, he would slice away at Radet’s face. He would perform the given task without any emotions, like a butcher mechanically cutting up meat.

“I was also doing my job.” Driden responded and Radet realized something.

Driden was a sword. He was a sword that was smelted by Hurio and then wielded by Aden in order to achieve a goal. He was an incomplete weapon that could only orbit the enemy, unable to turn or stop on his own.

He only looked at his task: To kill the enemy.

“Put everyone in jail.”

“Yes.”

The garrison soldiers dragged them out one by one. They would be detained in jail. He would wait for Jamero’s advice before

making the final decision.

Radet returned to his office. He sat on the chair.

“Hoo.”

Countless documents were on the wide table. This was the battlefield he was facing right now. There were a number of public works waiting for his signature, from minor administration to cooperation with Spinoa and countermeasures against the Great Clan.

Now his body was like Nameragon, so the enemy's sword was also heading towards his body. Compared to this, it was much simpler when he traveled around the world with a sword.

He recalled the three visitors. The orc warrior Crockta, the gnome soldier Tiyo and the half elf from Nuridot, Anor. Radet was once like that. He felt envious.

“No.”

He laughed and shook his head. He didn't want to return to the past. The memories he recalled with an ambiguous smile, they weren't always good. Radet's eyes always looked at the reality he faced.

In the past, his enemies were people who wielded the sword right in front of his eyes. But now his enemy was the north. The dark

elves would find it hard to overcome the waves of hardship that the great chieftain would create. Therefore, he needed to be more firm.

This weapon should be something other than a sword.

Knock knock knock.

Someone knocked on the door of the office. Radet grinned and said, "Come in."

It was Crockta, Tiyo, and Anor. Radet pointed to the chairs opposite the desk and welcomed, "Please relax."

Crockta didn't sit down. "I need your permission to enter the Temple of the Fallen God."

"Correct."

"Please allow it."

"Um..." Radet smiled. It wasn't easy for him to negotiate. "Not just anyone can enter the Temple of the Fallen God..."

Tiyo puffed up as he proudly proclaimed, "We aren't just anyone! We are benefactors who saved Nameragon dot!"

“That’s correct but...”

Crockta saw Radet’s mock hesitation and said, “Radet, stop pretending and tell us what you want.”

Radet nodded. “Crockta, you noticed quickly.”

“What else do you want from us dot? You are really shameless.”

“I’m sorry but I’m not a single body.” Radet shrugged and knocked on the table. The papers were piled up. He meant that Nameragon was his share as well. “If you go to Nameragon’s jail, Driden will be trapped.”

“Um.”

“Please bring him around.”

Tiyo frowned. “No, why do we need to bring that guy around? You do it dot?”

“I can’t do it, but it might be possible for you. Especially if it is Crockta.” Radet gazed at Crockta. “During your fight, did you see Driden’s face? He is that type of guy. A man stronger than him has to show him the way. Right now, he has lost his way and is only caught up in revenge for his father.”

Radet rose from his seat and approached Crockta. He then

handed over a piece of paper. Crockta's eyes narrowed as he read it.

“That stupid guy, tell him his fate.”

Crockta headed towards Nameragon's garrison. There was a detention room in the basement. The defense leader guided Crockta. Driden was staring into the darkness with both arms tied in a corner of the detention room.

“Open the door,” commanded Crockta. The garrison leader looked at Crockta silently opening the door..

“We will be out here, so take care of it dot.” Tiyo folded his arms in dissatisfaction. He didn't know why Crockta was supposed to take on this task.

Crockta entered alone. Driden turned his head. Crockta's massive body filled the jail as he looked down at Driden. There was a faint smile on Driden's face.

“Hey. Orc.”

“Dark elf.”

Driden was imprisoned without proper clothes. There were

bruises all over his body and his lips were swollen from beatings.

Then he said, “It was fun.”

Crockta nodded.

Radet was right. This guy was a sword that needed constant enemies. It was understandable why his father was crazy. A sword needed to be swung at someone. So far, Aden had been holding the hilt and now Radet wanted to hold it.

“I had a moderate amount of fun.”

Crockta, no, Jung Ian, was once a sword in the hands of others. The most regrettable thing about his past actions was that they weren't based on his own will, but on other people's decisions. Even if he felt regret, he could tolerate it if he decided it for himself. But his past self didn't do that.

He thought of the Ian of the past every time he saw Driden. This guy was like a bird who just broke out of his shell and didn't know anything. He just swung the blade.

Crockta lowered his head so that he was eye level with Driden. The swordsman frowned as the orc's rugged face was pushed in front of him.

“Phew.” Crockta sighed and shook his head. He didn't even appreciate a handsome face and was just a baby swinging a sword.

“Pathetic guy.”

“What?”

“That’s fine.” Crockta got up. “What would you have done if you had killed the enemy?”

“.....”

“No plans?”

“It is none of your business.”

“If it doesn’t exist, just say so.”

“.....”

“No.”

Suddenly, Crockta slapped Driden.

Slap!

“.....!”

Those outside who heard the sound were more surprised than

Driden, the one who had been hit.

“...Shit.” Driden bowed his face after he was slapped. He checked his mouth with his tongue and spat out blood.

Crockta spoke, “Are you angry?”

“.....”

Driden raised his head. His eyes were blazing. It was like he was looking at a mortal enemy with a burning anger in his eyes. His arms twitched as if they were saying that he wanted to wield a sword at that very moment.

The depth of emotion was different from when he was being beaten by the guards. The insults of others didn't reach him. However, the slap of the orc was like pouring boiling hot oil on him.

“This look is good. When you kill the enemy, come back for revenge.”

Crockta laughed as he looked at Driden's eyes that now looked alive. Then he dropped the piece of paper that Radet had given him.

“Judge who the enemy is for yourself.”

Driden's gaze turned towards the paper.

“This brat.”

Slap!

Crockta looked at him and slapped Driden one more time before leaving straight away. He felt a terrifying gaze stuck on his back.

“This bad... Ugly orc!” Driden's incensed voice was heard for the first time. The bad guy, the ugly orc left the jail.

Crockta hurriedly escaped the underground detention room.

“Phew. He has a temper.”

As soon as he left, the guard handed him something and said, “Take this.”

“.....?”

Crockta accepted it.

“The mayor told me to give this to you after you met Driden.”

It was a permit to enter the Temple of the Fallen God. Radet said to give the permit, regardless of his success or failure. He was a

relatively tricky dark elf.

“Thank you. Tell Radet that I did my best.”

“...That includes slapping him?”

“It is an orc thing.”

Crockta left the garrison building. Finally, he could reach his destination, the Temple of the Fallen God. He could finally go there.

“But what did it say on the piece of paper you gave to the dark elf dot?” asked Tiyo.

Crockta shrugged. “It was about his father.”

“The elf named Hurio?”

“Yes. Radet killed his father. The paper stated why Hurio became a madman.”

Hurio received critical wounds and became a murderer after that. If he didn't get hurt, Hurio might've remained as a swordsman and not be killed by Radet. And the one who wounded him.

“It was an attack by an orc from the Great Clan.”

“Hrmm...”

Tiyo nodded. Driden had to choose if his enemy would still be Radet, or if he should turn his sword and become hostile to the Great Clan.

“By the way, that dark elf called Driden,” quietly interrupted Anor. There was a serious expression on his face.

“Why, did you find something dot?”

“It’s a little weird.”

“What are you saying dot?” Tiyo focused on Anor’s words.

Anor said. “Doesn’t he know any curses? Ahahahat. Bad guy, ugly orc... What a young baby. Ahahahat. Saying things like that. Really funny.”

“.....”

“If I had been slapped, I wouldn’t have stopped with that. The dog bas....oof ooof!”

“Stop it dot.”

Tiyo blocked his mouth. Anor continued trying to assert himself. Crockta joined in to cover his mouth.

“Hup hup! Fuup! Fuup yop doppp! Hup hup!”

“Putting up with this dot...”

“Anor, children are watching...”

The dark elf children walking down the street were shocked and fled. Crockta shook his head. Anyhow, they somehow managed to reach the Temple of the Fallen God.

“Mayor, Driden surrendered. Aden and his group are separated from each other.”

“.....”

Radet nodded. He was stamping the papers.

“By the way... you are truly the mayor.”

“What do you mean?”

“Bringing Driden to your side.”

Radet laughed. “Let’s see...”

“I never imagined that he would direct his grudge towards the orcs.” The adjutant spoke in a lowered tone. “In fact, Hurio’s wounds weren’t due to orcs. Huhuhut.”

“Shut up.”

“Ah, I’m sorry.”

Radet extended a pile of paperwork. “Process these.”

“Yes. I will execute them right away.”

The adjutant scurried out of the office. Radet leaned back in his chair.

“I don’t know if it is good...”

His friend Hurio didn’t suffer a critical injury from an orc, but a creature.

Radet lied. It was so that he could use Driden to defend the dark elves in the future against the Great Clan.

Radet muttered bitterly, “I am now a politician.”

Chapter 98 – Temple Of The Fallen God (1)

“Who!”

“Goes!”

The two guards shouted in turn as if they were competing in a contest of loudness.

“We have a pass.”

The guards rolled their eyes and looked at the permit. On the paper, there was the signature from the leader of Nameragon, Radet, authorizing Crockta’s group to enter the Temple of the Fallen God.

The guards verified the contents before looking in front again. Then they shouted, “Ha!”

“Go!”

Then only their legs moved from the entrance. It was like a scene from a cartoon. Their movements were reminiscent of the orc guards at Orcrox.

“Um... very good.”

Crockta nodded. From the point of view of the gnome, it wasn’t

just good. Tiyo was also looking at them with impressed eyes.

“Oh... Ohhh...!” Tiyo looked up at them and applauded, “You guys are true soldiers dot! What is your name?”

The guards looked down at the shining Tiyo and answered again, “Nameragon’s garrison! Third class soldier! A! Ru! Nan! On duty!”

“Nameragon’s garrison! First class soldier! Ta! Na! Du! On duty!”

“.....!”

Tiyo’s eyes widened.

Then he also took an upright posture with his heels together and saluted excitedly, “I am Quantess Gnome Garrison’s leader, Ti! Yo! I salute your posture on duty dot! I can forgive a soldier who failed an operation, but a soldier who fails in guard duty can’t be forgiven!”

They didn’t shake at all at Tiyo’s praise. Tiyo clapped once again.

“The future of Nameragon is bright dot! Keep alert!”

They still kept their eyes at a 45-degree angle.

Crockta passed through the heavily guarded entrance to the

Temple of the Fallen God. The temple was located on top of a hill. They had to walk up stairs for a long time even after passing the entrance. It was located inside Nameragon but there were no visitors, so it looked deserted.

“This is the place.”

They stood in front of a temple. It wasn't small. It was different from the type of buildings Crockta saw in Elder Lord. There was an oriental feeling.

Vines were climbing up the wall and closed door. Crockta touched them. The accumulated dust appeared on his fingertips. He pulled at the door handle. The door slowly cracked open. The door was wide open and a cool breeze poured in.

“.....!”

Before stopping at the Temple of the Fallen God, he remembered what Radet said.

‘I don't know why you are going there, but despite being named after a god, it is just an abandoned place with limited access.’

However, Crockta currently felt something different. As he opened the door of the temple, a refreshing feeling swept through his body. He heard Tiyo and Anor breathing in deeply. They sniffed the air of the temple.

“Good.”

It was dark inside the temple. But it didn't feel ominous at all. Crockta went inside. After a few steps, Crockta felt something rattling.

Below.

“.....”

It was his belt. The Demon's Mouth slowly opened its eyes. The belt didn't show any movements, but as the master of the Demon's Belt, he could sense that the demon inside had woken up.

He remembered when he first met the demon. He witnessed the world's emptiness and was terrified, so he fought against the world. He swallowed the remains of evil that blocked the north continent. Shortly before leaving the Black Forest, he had said something unknown to Gushantimur.

Now, this guy was looking out again.

The sad eyes of Gordon popped into his head. Elder Lord. What type of secret was it hiding? Was it his vain delusion or really something more...

“What are you doing?”

Tiyo suddenly spoke from next to Crockta. Crockta turned his head.

The small gnome could be seen. He looked similar to a child, but he was completely different from all the children Crockta knew. The delicate eyebrows were raised why his expression said he was curious about Crockta's unpredictable behavior.

“Are you surprised?” Anor asked from his other side.

This time he looked at Anor. The cut ears showed unsightly scars. But Anor didn't bother concealing them. A human and dark elf, born and raised in persecution, now walking into the world with his companions. There was no need to investigate whether he was half or mixed. He had risen as 'Anor.'

The world that surrounded them. The air of Elder Lord, the sky of Elder Lord. All things were connected. He couldn't believe that this was just a well-made game.

The deaths he saw in front of him were no different from the tragedies of the battlefield that he saw in reality. He wanted to find the answer here.

Crockta stared back to the front. The surprisingly clean space despite being neglected for so long, and the darkness beyond it.

He walked towards it.

A humming sound heard.

It was dark.

They stopped walking. Tiyo grabbed the handle of General while Anor moved behind Crockta. It was a man's voice. He continued humming. It was a pleasant tone like he was doing an enjoyable task, such as touching the leaves of a bonsai or doing pottery.

The sound interrupted the serene darkness.

“There is supposed to be no one here,” whispered Tiyo.

Crockta nodded. There was no one here according to Radet. There were only the guards at the entrance, and no one else came with them. Who did this voice belong to?

The humming slowly got closer. A light dawned.

“.....!”

A man appeared around the corner. The sudden approach caused Crockta's group to step back. His appearance was human but not human. It was hard to see the features due to the darkness. It was similar to the demon in the belt that Crockta saw in the past. The part where the mouth should be moved in the darkness.

“——.”

More humming followed. Crockta grabbed the handle of the greatsword before letting go again. The presence has his hands clasped behind his back. He didn't feel like an enemy.

Chuckle.

Then he seemed to laugh.

“Hello, everyone.” It was the voice of an ordinary man. However, it seemed to tickle his ears with a strangely sweet touch. “Welcome to the Temple of the Fallen God.”

He placed a hand over his chest and bowed.

“What is your identity dot?” Tiyo asked. He was still worried about whether he should aim General.

Then the man said, “Since you are in a temple, an administrator I suppose. Isn't that right?”

“Radet said there was no one here.”

“Radet?”

“The mayor dot.”

“Aha. I don’t know the circumstances of the outside.” He whispered like it was a joke. “Of course, I’m not a person.”

Then he slowly stepped back in a bizarre, slipping motion. “It has been a long time since I’ve had visitors, so turn on the lights.”

He clapped. Dim lights scattered and the inside of the temple became brighter. It was a clean, white space. The interior was wider than what it seemed from the outside. The darkness around the black figure in front of them wasn’t disturbed at all by the light.

“Follow me.”

He turned around. But Crockta’s party didn’t follow him.

Tiyo asked again, “What is your name dot?”

“My name.” He stopped walking. He turned back and chuckled. He touched his chin and gazed into the air, like he was looking through old memories. “My name... it has been a long time since I said it.”

Then he laughed again.

“My name is Paimon. Tiyo.”

“.....!”

He also named Crockta and Anor in turn. He already knew about all of them.

“Since you came to the temple, shouldn’t you say a prayer? I’d like to show you around. You don’t need to be wary.”

Crockta’s group exchanged a glance. Then they nodded.

They couldn’t tell his identity but he didn’t seem to be an enemy. Crockta needed to know more about the Temple of the Fallen God.

They followed Paimon deeper inside. The building felt much larger than when viewed from the outside. They didn’t know if it really was that big, the construction was twisted or if there was something making the outside seem smaller.

There were paintings and carvings on the walls. They were delicate and beautiful but strange to understand. Sometimes they were small and intricate, sometimes so big that the group couldn’t guess what they were a part of.

“The fallen god fell down here, but it wasn’t a god who fell down.”

Then the man said. His tone was similar to when he was

humming.

“Now, this is the last place I suppose. It is a place to honor them.”

“.....”

“Look around slowly.”

Tiyo and Anor looked around. The murals on the walls and sculptures continued. They were obscure but beautiful.

“Great dot.”

“I’ve never seen anything like this before.”

In the meantime, Crockta kept staring at Paimon.

[Cannot be determined.]

He couldn’t understand Paimon with Heart and Soul Penetration. It meant Paimon was stronger than him or a very bizarre being.

They entered a new room within the temple. There was a rock altar in the center of the circular room. There were burnt and broken rocks. In Crockta’s eyes, they looked like meteorites.

Tiyo looked at the rocks and lifted General.

“Hey, Paimon.”

“Yes.”

“Those stones, aren’t they suspicious?”

“Huhu.”

Paimon just laughed. “I will now explain it properly. You are this type of person.”

Tiyo was still skeptical about Paimon. Anor hid behind Crockta again. “Radet definitely said there is nothing in the Temple of the Fallen God dot.”

Paimon nodded. “That’s right.”

“What are you saying dot?”

“They wouldn’t have seen anything in the Temple of the Fallen God.” Paimon approached them. It was a unique sliding motion. “You too wouldn’t have been able to meet me if it wasn’t for him.”

His hands reached out and pointed at Crockta.

“Me?”

“Yes.”

“What do you mean?”

“Don’t pretend to not know.”

The black figure laughed again. His fingertips that were aimed at Crockta’s chest slowly rose, slowly heading towards his forehead. Crockta’s face stiffened. He was pointing to the marker on Crockta’s forehead. As he waved his hand, the red headband around Crockta’s forehead was released.

It was the white star that indicated a user. The mark of the curse of the stars.

Then the man said, “Apostle of the fallen god.”

Crockta’s eyes widened. The man didn’t say curse of the stars, but ‘apostle of the fallen god’.

That meant...

However, Crockta’s idea didn’t go further.

Paimon pointed to his own forehead. It was shiny. Indeed, there was a white star on his forehead.

Chapter 99 – Temple Of The Fallen God (2)

He couldn't believe his eyes. There was a white star like his on Paimon's forehead.

A user?

But Crockta couldn't ask the question. Paimon's dark eyes stared into him. He couldn't move like a gun was aimed at him. It was like Paimon's eyes were sucking Crockta's soul into the darkness.

Paimon said, "Maybe, you."

His tone sunk as he looked Crockta up and down. Crockta felt a chill go down his spine. It was like a swan had noticed that a duck was among its flock.

Paimon spoke to Crockta again. However, he no longer spoke out loud. It was a one-way injection of meaning and emotion into Crockta's head.

'You know nothing.'

His head was whirring. Crockta folded his knee to try and withstand it. Paimon's will shook his head. His harsh rebuke was like a raging storm inside Crockta's head.

Crockta shook his head and stared at Paimon. Everything was

dark. His vision was tinged black. Now he couldn't see Tiyo or Anor anymore. Crockta was standing alone in a darkness where nothing shone.

‘Apostle of the fallen god,’ Paimon called out. ‘You have the star, but you don't know anything about them.’

Heat came from his forehead. There was a terrible pain that seemed to be coming from the star mark. Crockta roared and pulled out his greatsword. At that moment, the darkness in front of him blurred.

Crockta wielded Ogre Slayer towards the darkness. Nothing was caught on the blade, but the momentum temporarily shook the darkness. He could feel Paimon taking a step back. But after that, the darkness gathered again. It was a deeper concentration of darkness. In that gap, a force struck Crockta's abdomen.

Kakang!

Crockta flinched.

‘What happened?’ Paimon's voice was no longer as gentle or soft as before. It was like a raging beast. His wrath rang in the darkness. ‘Who are you?!’

The darkness gathered once again. It felt like it was trying to crush Crockta. The darkness gathered above Crockta's head in order to crush him. His instincts sent a warning. Crockta raised his

greatsword.

At that moment, something appeared in front of Crockta.

‘You.’ Paimon stopped.

In the darkness, another darkness moved. Crockta could feel his presence. A child made of darkness, just like Paimon, appeared. It was the demon sleeping in his belt.

Paimon murmured with confusion. ‘So, no, one of those guys.’

After the demon appeared, the pressure on Crockta faded away. Crockta sighed as he put Ogre Slayer away. Now his breathing returned to normal. His vision was dark but he didn’t feel like he was drowning like before.

Crockta spoke, “What is the star on the forehead?”

Paimon was silent. Crockta could sense it. Paimon had a white star, yet he wasn’t a user.

He was someone that the NPCs called ‘cursed by the stars’. If so, what was the curse of the stars? Was it really a concept created for the convenience of the users?

The demon of the belt that looked like a child whispered out. Paimon eventually nodded. His answer entered Crockta’s head.

‘A stigma showing the blessing of a god. It is the mark of a god’s apostle.’

“What is an apostle?”

‘Those who choose to serve the god and receive the god’s share.’

“Who is the god?”

‘That...’ Paimon said.

‘One who watched the end. One who saw all deaths and mourned the world. That god’s name...’

Paimon opened his mouth. Crockta waited for an answer. The moment that Paimon was able to say the name of the fallen god...

Time was stretched.

“.....!”

The world slowed down. Time was divided. Time was divided then proliferated over and over. Numerous chaotic scenes occurred in between.

In the end...

Crockta stood on a snowy field.

“No,” said Ian.

“This is really...”

He kicked the ground. It was scattered white ash powder.

“Not much.”

He hesitantly sat down. The dark blue night sky unfolded endlessly above him.

The land was all white. At first, he thought it was a snowy field. However, he soon realized that the whole land was filled with white ash. The white particles scattered every time he moved. He grabbed a handful and squeezed. The ash ran through his palm and fell down.

A laugh emerged. He laughed out loud.

“This type of thing...”

But the laughter didn’t reach his eyes. Maybe he had a foreboding

feeling.

He stared at the distant horizon where the sky and earth met. A shooting star passed in a semicircle above Ian's head.

Someone spoke from behind him, "Isn't it pretty?"

Ian turned his head. Gray skin, gray hair, the ash in this place lumped together to form a human figure, a gray woman sitting in the same posture as Ian.

"I wanted to see you." She laughed. It wasn't the smile of a person, giving off a sense of heterogeneity.

"Ian. No, shall I call you Crockta?"

"That's fine."

She somehow felt familiar to Jung Ian. It was a feeling he had been aware of for a long time.

Thanks to that familiar feeling, he knew her identity. Sometimes she expressed herself to him in her own way. She always watched and sometimes helped, sometimes teased him. She would be 'it.' The thing that sustained Elder Lord. The system.

Ian sighed. Ian, connected to Elder Lord, became Crockta and was sucked into the darkness by Paimon, only to fall into a strange

world. Then he met the system. He didn't need to hear the answer to the question of whether Elder Lord was just a game or not.

“Explain.”

Ian picked up a pile of ash again and threw it into the air. It blew upwards. The ash fell like snowflakes around Ian and the grey woman. The woman burst out laughing.

“Your guess is correct.”

“Elder Lord?”

“Another dimension.”

“.....”

Ian threw ashes towards her. She didn't avoid them. She smiled through the white powder.

“Then everything that the users killed in Elder Lord was actually alive in another dimension?”

“That's right.”

“I killed things?”

“Yes.”

“They aren’t artificial intelligence?”

She looked at Ian. Ian also met her eyes. Everything was grey colored. The eyes were so grey they were close to white. The face imitated human emotions but they weren’t feelings Ian could empathize with.

She slowly replied, “Would that be so different?” An unknown, mocking smile appeared on her face. “If they were all AIs created by computers, what would be different?”

Ian couldn’t answer.

“Just like how humans think ants are insignificant, there are those who think of humans as ants.” She pointed to the sky. Ian looked up at the sky.

Nothing could be seen in the blue sky.

No.

No.

She beckoned. Ian’s vision became sharper. Ian could see the numerous white stars hidden in the sky. They were faint stars that went out. The last stop of the stars. They just waited to die before

going completely black.

A white dwarf star. The dark blue sky here had countless white dwarfs.

“The stars.”

She knocked on Ian’s shoulder. Her touch was as light as a feather.

“Death is both sad and equal. It doesn’t matter if the worlds are small, big, or exist elsewhere. That’s it.”

Ian looked at her. She seemed to blend in with the ashes that filled this world.

Ian asked, “What was your purpose for making Elder Lord?”

“I want to go back.”

“To where?”

“To where I originally was.”

“To the world of Elder Lord?”

She nodded. “You have to work hard so I can go back.”

“How?”

“It is a secret.”

Ian asked again, “Then, are you on Earth right now?”

“That’s right. I’ll serve you delicious food if you ever visit.”

She laughed. Ian didn’t laugh.

“As you said, it is sad when life dies. But because of you, a lot of people don’t know that Elder Lord is real, and that they are killing beings of another world.”

“That’s right.” She made a depressed expression. “I know best since I give the quests.”

“Despite knowing that, you still made Elder Lord?”

“It can’t be helped.”

“It is all for the sake of returning to the world of Elder Lord?”

“That’s right.”

“Why don’t you remain on Earth?”

“It doesn’t matter.” She touched the ash on the floor. It moved through the air. “I have something I need to do.”

Ian rose from his seat. “It doesn’t matter if people of your world die?”

“It can’t be helped.” She looked up at Ian. “As a matter of fact, I wish that your world would kill them harder.”

“.....”

As she said that, a transparent wall appeared between her and Ian. Ian was surprised and raised a hand to the wall.

“What is this?”

“To stop you from punching me.”

“.....”

She shook her hips and got up. Her body was so small that she barely reached Ian’s shoulder.

“Either way, it was nice meeting you, Ian. I really wanted to meet you. You are the most special existence out of all those I watch.

Honorable Orc Crockta!”

She laughed. Ian brought his face to the wall. Her appearance could be seen through the transparent wall. She smiled and leaned towards Ian. They looked into each other’s eyes with the wall between them. Beyond the wall, the ash grey form seemed like it would melt away at any moment.

“What is your true purpose?”

“Secret.”

“Did you lead me here?”

“Something like that. Thank Gordon for me.”

“Gordon’s identity?”

“You have a lot of questions. It is a secret.”

“Your real purpose?”

“I told you. It is a secret.”

Everything was a secret.

Ian frowned. “I’ll tell everybody about Elder Lord.”

“I’m sorry but no one will believe you.”

“There will be some...”

“Using my power, I made it so that no one understands it except for you.”

Ian’s eyes widened. “What?”

“Elder Lord is suspicious in many ways, yet countless people are participating without any doubts. Why? And those living in the world of Elder Lord believe that the users acting like that are just a phenomenon of the curse of the stars. Haven’t you wondered why?”

“.....”

“Changing one’s awareness is just one of my powers. However, I’ve spent so much power that it is hard now. Pant pant. I can’t stay with you for much longer.”

She waved farewell. The world started to crumble. It was ending.

Ian had so much more he wanted to ask. But he instinctively felt that he only had one last question.

A quick look showed him that she was waving with a smile.

Ian hesitated. “You...”

He had a thought. His speech lengthened. “You don’t seem like a bad person. I can feel it. So...”

“Thank you. I’m glad.”

“So...”

Ian asked, “Do you need to continue this ‘game’, Elder Lord?”

Ian felt regret as he finished speaking. The question was one that could be answered with a ‘yes’ or a ‘no.’ He would be unable to infer further information from such a simple question. But it was the thing Ian was most curious about.

She said that death was sad. Nevertheless, she was making Elder Lord in the hope that more people died.

What did she see?

Her hand stopped moving upon hearing Ian’s question. The world was collapsing until only she, Ian, and the wall between them remained. They were the only things left.

She smiled and replied, “I was incredibly surprised after falling into Ian’s world. It is a great place. I never imagined that such a

place could exist.”

Ian tried to speak but he could no longer open his mouth.

“So I have to do this even more.”

His body stiffened like it was stuffed. Now he could only listen to her.

“I’m sorry. It can’t be helped. I hope you will understand. There was a man who made this excuse in your history.” She looked up at the sky with a bittersweet expression. There was nothing. “The sun goes down, but there is still a long way to go, I know there is something wrong but I can’t use any other methods.”

After that, Ian lost consciousness.

Chapter 100 – At A Loss

Ian shut down his access to Elder Lord.

He sat down on the floor and felt nauseous. The bitter fluid in his stomach welled up but he clenched his jaw and swallowed it. A burning sensation in his esophagus could be felt.

The boundaries between reality and fantasy were blurred.

In Elder Lord, he found the Temple of the Fallen God like Gordon told him to. At that place, he met an unknown being called Paimon and was sucked into darkness. He questioned Paimon about the white star on his forehead. In the end, he met a gray woman in another world.

She was Elder Lord, the system that watched over the world of Elder Lord. It could either be the truth, or a cruel joke told by a sophisticated virtual reality system.

He didn't know. Ian wiped his mouth and left the room. He stood in front of the sink. He washed his face with cold water. His head cleared. His face in the mirror looked haggard. He stared at his own eyes.

In the world covered with ashes, he saw numerous white stars in the dark blue sky. It was a tomb. The stars would have to endure a lot of time before they lost all their light and became an unobservable star. Until they turned black like his eyes.

‘Raven, I sometimes envy your black eyes.’

‘Why are you envious?’

‘Black is the color of mourning. Your eyes seem to be comforting the targets while the mission is carried out. Look at me. How annoyed would they be if they looked into my eyes before dying?’

Her eyes were a cheerful blue. Old memories were revived and disturbed his head. He frowned and placed his forehead on the cold surface of the mirror.

He thought about it. Make some assumptions and continue the thought experiment.

Then, let’s assume Elder Lord was a reality. Elder Lord wasn’t a game, but a passage from Earth leading to somewhere else. If so, what about the things he went through? The orcs. They weren’t merely warriors, but a group of people who followed their beliefs.

Then Grom, who thought they were just characters in a game, betrayed them. Orcs were killed. There were also the victims in Arnin. The Chesswood residents who died. Quantes, Shakan, the north, they were all real. All the wretched screams and pained faces were real.

Ian closed his eyes. He thought that his head would become clearer once he confined his vision to darkness, but he just felt

more confused. He opened his eyes and splashed them with water. The cold water cooled his head for a brief moment.

The door opening from outside was heard.

“Oppa, I’m home.”

He heard Yiyu’s voice behind him. Her voice woke Ian, showing him that he was standing in reality. He entered the living room where she was unpacking her bag.

“You’re not playing the game today. Did you quit?”

It was a strangely pleasant voice. She cleaned up her belongings, looked in the mirror and checked her makeup. She was going out again.

Ian asked, “You’re not going to play Elder Lord again, are you?”

“Huh? Uh. Should I?”

“Don’t do it.”

“.....?”

She was confused. Ian didn’t say anything else and entered his room to change clothes. He dressed roughly and left the house. Ian

left but he couldn't figure out where to go. He didn't want to go to the café. As he walked down the street, he saw the gym next to the street sign. It was good to sweat when his thoughts weren't organized.

Ian headed towards 'Baek Hanho's Gym.' Baek Hanho was sitting in the back room. Ian greeted him with a bow. Baek Hanho raised an eyebrow at the sudden visit and sincere attitude, but he didn't say anything else.

Ian changed into basic training clothes.

"Can I use this?"

"Sure."

He wrapped bandages around his hands and wore gloves. The gym members were scattered about the area. Some were lifting weights, doing crossfit alone or punching a sandbag. It was a time when there weren't many people.

Ian stood in front of a sandbag in a corner. He stared at the black leather surface. He could see parts where it had been beaten. Ian patted it down with the palm of his hand. The sandbag was adjusted.

He would punch this one until he was exhausted. When was the last time he did this? He asked himself and his memory led him to Orcrox Fortress.

He hit the sandbag with his fist.

Paang!

He approached silently and delivered through kinetic energy through a snap. Ian's fist hit the punching bag. A delightful sound spread out. Paang, paang, more eyes focused on him every time the sandbag shook. He felt disconnected.

‘Don't drop your head! Look ahead! Look at the enemy!’

His strength increased.

‘It is hard! Nobody cares!’

The punching bag started to shake greatly.

‘Everything is hard! It doesn't mean you should relax! Swing it, bigger!’

Kwaang!

The sandbag was strongly pushed and moved in a semicircle. The eyes of the members gathered again at the strong sound of the sandbag being hit. Ian grabbed the returning sandbag and breathed out.

Baek Hanho approached. “What are you doing?”

“Master.”

“What’s going on?”

Baek Hanho was confused.

He knew that Ian wasn’t the type of man to reveal his emotions. He didn’t shed any tears when his parents died and he was left with his sister. His face was calm even when someone was beating him up. When he left to become a mercenary, he waved and smiled like he was going to a picnic.

Now he seemed to be angry.

“Nothing.”

“Hrmm...”

Baek Hanho touched his chin.

“Do you want a cup of coffee?”

He gestured towards the manager’s office.

The manager's room was as luxuriously decorated as Baek Hanho. There were a few chairs and a wooden table set up in the middle of the room for staff meetings. The two sat facing each other.

Baek Hanho made coffee. He didn't like coffee, but he was used to it.

Ian opened his mouth, "Master."

Baek Hanho looked up from the pricey coffee machine.

"Let me ask you something. What if..."

Ian asked Baek Hanho about Elder Lord. It was a story about how it was another world, not a game. However, Baek Hanho didn't agree with him. No, it was like the concept itself didn't reach him.

"It was a reality instead of a game, have you been playing too much Elder Lord?"

"What if?"

"What about it? This guy, you shouldn't do this."

“Huh?”

“A decent guy like you shouldn’t be all caught up in games. Should I introduce you to a female?”

“Master, that’s not... just imagine it.”

“Shut up! This jerk saying something like this all of a sudden.”
Baek Hanho chuckled.

Ian looked down. Baek Hanho’s imagination was always open. But he didn’t even want to start this conversation.

Did that woman really have the ability to change perceptions?

Ian tried to carry on the conversation a few more times, but Baek Hanho just kept on laughing and changing the topic. It was like he couldn’t hear the dialogue that Elder Lord might be another dimension.

Ian opened his phone while talking a little bit more to Baek Hanho. There was a message.

[Oppa contacting me first, what is it?]

It was Ji Hayeon. Ian wanted to meet her. It was well known that Elder Saga Corporation was a company under the jurisdiction of Ji Hayeon’s Myeongsong Group. The first thing he thought about

after closing the connection was to meet her and talk. She might know something.

As Ian wrote his reply, Baek Hanho glanced at the screen of his phone.

“Hah. You already have a ‘some’ girl.” (Korean slang= [link](#))

The word ‘some’ emerged from Baek Hanho’s mouth.

“You also know the word ‘some’.”

“This guy, I need to be caught up with the new generation’s slang if I want to manage young people.”

“At any rate, it isn’t such a relationship. I’ll be going now.”

As Ian headed towards the showers, Baek Hanho said to his back. “Don’t talk about Elder Lord not being a game in front of me. I don’t like it.”

“.....”

Ian ignored him. He washed his sweat off in the shower room and left the gym. He drove near her company.

Ji Hayeon was very busy but she said she was glad to make time

for Ian. Ian didn't reply. He couldn't spare his heart right now.

[Are you reading it now?]

He sat in the cafe where they promised to meet and received a notification on his phone. Ian opened the message and checked it before turning off his phone again.

At that moment.

“Wah, amazing. I saw it. Oppa just pretended not to see my message.”

Ji Hayeon's voice was heard from behind him. Ian's face didn't change as he responded, “Maybe.”

“What, did you decide to take off your mask? Oppa was originally like this.”

“.....”

Ji Hayeon seemed to be in a good mood. She sat down on the opposite side. Her glowing beauty made her seem like she was wearing a halo. Her brown hair was wavy, like she had just been to a hair salon.

“What happened?”

She smiled.

Ian cut to the chase. “It is about Elder Lord.”

“Oh, then speak.”

“How does it work?”

“You want to know a company secret?”

“What do you know about the core system, Albino?”

“Umm...” She made a vague smile. “Are you an industrial spy?”

“I’m just curious.”

“I’m confused but I will answer. I don’t know. I don’t know anything. Everything regarding Elder Saga and Albino is confidential. What happened? Is there a bug in the game or something?”

Ian looked at her. Her eyes showed that she really knew nothing. Ian sighed. He was thinking too simple. He had been too hasty. Ian regretted trying to meet her and sipped his espresso.

“Nothing.”

Bitter. It was an okay taste. The bitter taste cleared his mind as he decided to forget about the things that he was worried about.

Whether Elder Lord was a reality or not didn't matter. It wasn't that he murdered people. Indeed, there was no way to prove if it was another dimension. Just turning his eyes away was enough. He lived in this world here.

There was his sister, Baek Hanho and Cafe Reason. There was Ji Hayeon who he had an old bond with and they were now drinking coffee together. This was his world. It was enough to think of Elder Lord as a dream that passed through his life for a while.

“Oh, are you smiling?”

His mind felt lighter. Ian smiled.

“I'm sorry for calling you.”

“I suddenly have a bitter feeling. I don't like it...” Ian laughed as Ji Hayeon mock frowned at him.

“I'm sorry but can I ask for a favor?”

“If I can help then I will.”

“Umm...”

She said. “Why don’t we talk later? Oppa.”

Ian checked his phone. Han Yeori was whining. Ian nodded.

“Yes. I will.”

Ian said goodbye to Ji Hayeon. She left for a work schedule. He headed towards Café Reason. He didn’t achieve anything from meeting Ji Hayeon but it felt like his head was organized.

Just don’t play Elder Lord. He would quit the game.

Ian thought so. Tiyo and Anor were there, but they could take care of themselves. He didn’t want any more suffering. The important thing to him wasn’t the world of Elder Lord, but this place. He started the game for Yiyu in the first place. Ian would defend the things important to him, including his sister and Café Reason.

That was enough. He headed downtown.

This place contained one of Han Yeori’s favorite bakeries. He was going to buy something for her there. She would whine, but eventually put the bread in her mouth with a smile. Then Yoo Sooyeon would start asking for a salary raise.

Ian smiled as he imagined it. It was a pleasant thought.

Someone suddenly spoke loudly, “Uh, what is that?”

The big screen installed on a building shone. People began to stop walking.

Ian raised his head. There. Elder Lord was being shown.

“It is no joke.”

Ian had to agree. Utter devastation. Mountains of dead bodies. A series of mosaics covered the screen.

-The Heaven and Earth Clan has turned the Adillo region into a wasteland. They have continued their unbroken march after winning against the Metatron Guild.

-It is the work of Choi Hansung, whose user name is ‘Rommel’ and who has a connection to the human kingdom. The Heaven and Earth Clan has recently received a large-scale quest. Every time they destroy the southern continent, there are enormous rewards.

-Sweeping everything away with violence. Choi Hansung, mountains of corpses are piled up behind him.

A map of Elder Lord was displayed. The Heaven and Earth Clan’s advance to the southern continent was visible. Every time a city or

village was destroyed, they displayed a star and edited images of the destruction caused. The slogan 'Choi Hansung, the nucleus of the storm sweeping Elder Lord' came to mind.

-As the Heaven and Earth Clan is becoming prominent, the status of Koreans in the Elder Lord community has improved greatly. In many old games, South Korea was named as the powerhouse in e-sports. There is a happy concern about whether the Korean Empire will begin in Elder Lord.

-Personally, I am very proud. User Choi Hansung. And the Heaven and Earth Clan. They are building up national prestige.

“So cool.”

A passerby watching the screen muttered. Ian looked at his face. It was filled with respect.

“The best.”

Ian looked at the screen again. The tragedy of the battlefield and the history of the area destroyed were shown in turn.

Choi Hansung's interview was quoted. Every time he killed, his rewards and the achievement points would increase exponentially. The goal of the Heaven and Earth Clan was to grow to become the strongest. They were continuing the war in the world of Elder Lord at this moment, overwhelmingly slaughtering the enemies.

The hosts analyzing Choi Hansung and the Heaven and Earth Clan changed the topic.

–Breaking news. It is said that a new large-scale quest has just been announced through the system. These things are very rare.

–Not long ago, it was reported that the hunter Shakan opened up the north. Everyone was curious about the north and their questions have been resolved today.

–There was a system message that in the north, a mad orc chieftain is preparing for a war that will lead to the destruction of the continent.

–Is a mainstream quest finally starting?

–The or chieftain has started a war against the whole north in order to invade the continent. I don't know about matters in the north but a bloody war is about to begin. According to the system, the north is already in turmoil from the war. It is terrible.

–I look forward to it. Elder Lord. There were opinions that it has stagnated lately, but this has overturned such concerns. As expected of Elder Saga Corporation.

Ian stopped in place.

People were passing by. The crowd kept changing as Ian stood there. There was no expression on his face.

The human life.

He stood at a crossroad. His choice at this moment would change a lot.

Could he say that his choice was right? Could he say that he didn't regret it? Where did his path lead?

Ian.

Ian was at a loss.